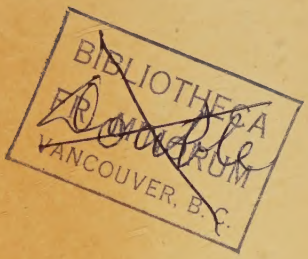

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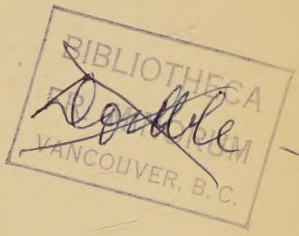
THE ALDINE EDITION OF THE BRITISH POETS

THE POEMS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOL II



THE POETICAL WORKS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER

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WITH MEMOIR BY SIR HARRIS NICOLAS

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THE

POEMS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

THE CANTERBURY TALES.

THE PROLOGUE.

HAN that Aprille with his schowres swoote
The drought of Marche hath perced to the roote,
And bathud every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertue engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
Enspirud hath in every holte and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours i-ronne,
And smale fowles maken melodie,
That slepen al the night with open yhe,
So priketh hem nature in here corages:—
Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,
And palmers for to seeken straunge strondes,
To ferne halwes, kouthe in sondry londes;

And specially, from every schires ende
Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wende,
The holy blisful martir for to seeke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.
Byfel that, in that sesoun on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabbard as I lay,
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Canturbury with ful devout corage,
At night was come into that hostelrie
Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,
Of sondry folk, by aventure i-falle
In felawschipe, and pilgryms were thei alle,
That toward Canturbury wolden ryde.
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
And wel we weren esud atte beste.
And schortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
That I was of here felawschipe anon,
And made forward erly to aryse,
To take oure weye ther as I yow devyse.
But natheles, whiles I have tyme and space,
Or that I ferthere in this tale pace,
Me thinketh it acordant to resoun,
To telle yow alle the condicioun
Of eche of hem, so as it semede me,
And which they weren, and of what degre;
And eek in what array that they were inne:
And at a knight than wol I first bygynne.
A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man,
That from the tyme that he ferst bigan
To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.
Ful worthi was he in his lordes werre,

And thereto hadde he riden, noman ferre,
As wel in Cristendom as *in* hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthinesse.
At Alisandre he was whan it was wonne,
Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bygonne
Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce.
In Lettowe hadde reyced and in Ruce
No cristen man so ofte of his degré.
In Gernade atte siege hadde he be
Of Algesir, and riden in Belmarie.
At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,
Whan they were wonne; and in the Greete see
At many a noble arive hadde he be.
At mortal batailles hadde he ben fiftene,
And foughten for oure feith at Tramassene
In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthi knight hadde ben also
Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,
Ayeyn another hethene in Turkye:
And everemore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
And though that he was worthy he was wys,
And of his port as meke as *is* a mayde.
He never yit no vilonye ne sayde
In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
He was a verray perfight gentil knight.
But for to telle you of his array,
His hors was good, but he ne was nought gay.
Of fustyan he wered a gepoun
Al bysmoterud with his haburgeoun.
For he was late comen from his viage,
And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.
With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
A lovyer, and a lusty bacheler,

With lokkes crulle as they were layde in presse.
Of twenty yeer he was of age I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wondurly delyver, and gret of strengthe.
And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachie,
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and in Picardie,
And born him wel, as in so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
Embrowdid was he, as it were a mede
Al ful of fresshe floures, white and reede.
Syngynge he was, or flowtynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the moneth of May.
Schort was his goune, with sleeves long and wyde.
Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and *faire* ryde.
He cowde songes wel make and endite,
Justne and eek daunce, and wel purtray and write.
So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
He sleep nomore than doth a nightyngale.
Curteys he was, lowly, and servysable,
And carf byforn his fadur at the table.

A YEMAN had he, and servantes nomoo
At that tyme, for him luste ryde soo;
And he was clad in coote and hood of grene.
A shef of pecok arwes bright and kene
Under his belte he bar ful thriftily.
Wel cowde he dresse his takel yomanly;
His arwes drowpud nought with fetheres lowe.
And in his hond he bar a mighty bowe.
A not-heed hadde he with a broun visage.
Of woode-craft cowde he wel al the usage.
Upon his arme he bar a gay bracer,
And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,
And on that other side a gay daggere.

Harneysed wel, and scharp at poynt of spere;
A Cristofre on his brest of silver schene.
An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
A forster was he sothely, as I gesse.
Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
That of hire smylyng was ful symple and coy;
Hire grettest ooth nas but by seynt Loy;
And sche was clept madame Englentyne.
Ful wel sche sang the servise devyne,
Entuned in hire nose ful semyly;
And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,
Aftur the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe.
At mete wel i-taught was sche withalle;
Sche leet no morsel from hire lippes falle,
Ne wette hire fyngres in hire sauce deepe.
Wel cowde sche carie a morsel, and wel keepe,
That no drope *ne* fil uppon hire breste.
In curtesie was sett al hire leste.
Hire overlippe wypude sche so clene,
That in hire cuppe *ther* was no ferthing sene
Of grees, whan sche dronken hadde hire draught.
Ful semely aftur hire mete sche raught.
And sikurly sche was of gret disport,
And ful plesant, and amyable of port,
And peyned hire to counterfete cheere
Of court, and ben estatlich of manere,
And to ben holden digne of reverence.
But for to speken of hire conscience,
Sche was so charitable and so pitous,
Sche wolde weepe if that sche sawe a mous
Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
Of smale houndes hadde sche, that sche fedde

With rostud fleissh, and mylk, and wastel breed.
But sore wepte sche if oon of hem were deed,
Or if men smot it with a yerde smerte:
And al was conscience and tendre herte.
Ful semely hire wymple i-pynched was;
Hire nose streight; hire eyen grey as glas;
Hire mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
But sikurly sche hadde a fair forheed.
It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe:
For hardily sche was not undurgrowe.
Ful fetys was hire cloke, as I was waar.
Of smal coral aboute hire arme sche baar
A peire of bedes gaudid al with grene;
And theron heng a broch of gold ful schene,
On which was first i-writen a crowned A,
And after that, *Amor vincit omnia.*
Anothur Nonne *also* with hire hadde sche,
That was hire chapelleyn, and Prestes thre.

A Monk ther was, a fair for the maistrie,
An out-rydere, that lovede venerye;
A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
Ful many a deynté hors hadde he in stable:
And whan he rood, men might his bridel heere
Gyngle in a whistlyng wynd so cleere,
And eek as lowde as doth the chapel belle.
Ther as the lord was keper of the selle,
The reule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,
Bycause that it was old and somdel streyt,
This ilke monk leet forby hem pace,
And helde aftur the newe world the space.
He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
That seith, that hunters been noon holy men;
Ne that a monk, whan he is cloysterles,

Is likned to a fissche that is watirles;
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text hild he not worth an oystre.
And I seide his opinioun was *right* good.
What! schulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
Uppon a book in cloystre alway to powre,
Or swynke with his handes, and laboure,
As Austyn byt? How schal the world be served?
Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.
Therfore he was a pricasour aright;
Greyhoundes he hadde as swifte as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
I saugh his sleves purfiled atte hond
With grys, and that the fynest of a lond.
And for to festne his hood undur his chyn
He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pyn:
A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.
His heed was ballid, and schon as eny glas,
And eek his face as he hadde be anoynt.
He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;
His eyen steep, and rollyng in his heed,
That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
His bootes souple, his hors in gret estat.
Now certeinly he was a fair prelat;
He was not pale as a for-pyned goost.
A fat swan loved he best of eny roost.
His palfray was as broun as eny berye.

A Frere ther was, a wantoun and a merye,
A lymytour, a ful solempne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that can
So moche of daliaunce and fair langage.
He hadde i-made many a fair mariage

Of yonge wymmen, at his owne cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.
Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
With frankeleyns overal in his cuntre,
And eek with worthi wommen of the toun:
For he hadde power of confessioun,
As seyde himself, more than a curat,
For of his ordre he was licenciat.
Ful sweetly herde he confessioun,
And plesaunt was his absolucioun;
He was an esy man to yeve penance
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance:
For unto a povre ordre for to geve
Is signe that a man is wel i-schreve.
For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe though him sore smerte.
Therfore in-stede of wepyng and prayeres,
Men mooten yiven silver to the pore freres.
His typet was ay farsud ful of knyfes
And pynnes, for to yive faire wyfes.
And certaynli he hadde a mery noote.
Wel couthe he synge and pleye on a rote.
Of yeddynges he bar utturly the prys.
His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys.
Therto he strong was as a champioun.
He knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
And every ostiller or gay tapstere,
Better than a lazer, or a beggere,
For unto such a worthi man as he
Acorded not, as by his faculté,
To have with *suche* sike lazars aqueyntaunce.

It is not honest, it may not avaunce,
For to delen with such poraile,
But al with riche and sellers of vitaille.
And overal, ther eny profyt schulde arise,
Curteys he was, and lowe of servyse.
Ther was no man nowher so vertuous.
He was the beste begger in al his hous,
For though a widewe hadde but oo schoo,
So plesaunt was his *In principio*,
Yet wolde he have a ferthing or he wente.
His purchace was bettur than his rente.
And rage he couthe and pleye *right* as a whelpe,
In love-dayes ther couthe he mochil helpe.
For ther was he not like a cloysterer,
With a thredbare cope as a pore scoler,
But he was like a maister or a pope.
Of double worstede was his semy-cope,
That rounded was as a belle out of presse.
Somwhat he lipsede, for wantounesse,
To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge;
And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde sunge,
His eyghen twynkeled in his heed aright,
As don the sterres in the frosty night.
This worthi lymytour was called Huberd.
A Marchaunt was ther with a forked berd,
In motteleye, *and* high on horse he sat,
Uppon his heed a Flaundrisch bever hat;
His botus clapsud faire and fetously.
His resons he spak ful solempnely,
Sownynge alway the eneres of his wynnyng.
He wolde the see were kepud for eny thing
Betwixe Middulburgh and Orewelle.
Wel couthe he in eschange scheeldes selle.

This worthi man ful wel his witte bisette;
Ther wiste no man that he was in dette,
So estately was he of governaunce,
With his bargayns, and with his chevysaunce.
For sothe he was a worthi man withalle,
But soth to say, I not what men him calle.
A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That unto logik hadde longe *tyme* i-go.
Al-so lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But lokede holwe, and therto soburly.
Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
For he hadde nought geten him yit a benefice,
Ne was not worthy to haven an office.
For him was lever have at his beddes heed
Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
Of Aristotil, and of his philosophie,
Then robus riche, or fithul, or sawtrie.
But although he were a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litul gold in cofre;
But al that he mighte gete, and his frendes sente,
On bookes and his lernyng he it spente,
And busily gan for the soules pray
Of hem that yaf him wherwith to scolay.
Of studie tooke he most cure and heede.
Not oo word spak he more than was neede;
Al that he spak it was of heye prudence,
And schort, and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.
Sownynge in moral manere was his speche,
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.
A Sergeant of Lawe, war and wys,
That often hadde ben atte parvys,
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.

Discret he was, and of gret reverence
He semede such, his wordes were so wise,
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patent, and by pleyn commissioun;
For his science, and for his heih renoun,
Of fees and robes had he many oon.
So gret a purchasour was ther nowher noon.
Al was fee symple to him in effecte,
His purchasyng mighte nought ben suspecte.
Nowher so besy a man as he ther nas,
And yit he semede besier than he was.
In termes hadde *he* caas and domes alle,
That fro the tyme that kyng [Will] were falle.
Thereto he couthe endite, and make a thing,
Ther couthe no man pynche at his writyng.
And every statute couthe he pleyn by roote.
He rood but hoomly in a medled coote,
Gird with a seynt of silk, with barres smale;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A Frankeleyn ther was in his companye;
Whit was his berde, as *is* the dayesye.
Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
Wel loved he in the morn a sop of wyn.
To lyven in delite was al his wone,
For he was Epicurius owne sone,
That heeld opynyoun that pleyn delyt
Was verraily felicité perfyt.
An househaldere, and that a gret, was he;
Seynt Julian he was in his countré.
His breed, his ale, was alway after oon;
A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
Withoute bake mete was never his hous,
Of fleissch and fissch, and that so plentyvous.

It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke,
Of alle deyntees that men cowde thynke.
Aftur the sondry sesouns of the yeer,
He chaunged hem at mete and at soper.
Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
And many a brem and many a luce in stewe.
Woo was his cook, but if his sauce were
Poynant and scharp, and redy al his gere.
His table dormant in his halle alway
Stood redy covered al the longe day.
At sessions ther was he lord and sire.
Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the schire.
An anlas and a gipser al of silk
Heng at his gerdul, whit as morne mylk.
A schirreve hadde he ben, and a counter;
Was nowher such a worthi vavaser.

An Haburdassher and a Carpenter,
A Webbe, a Deyer, and a Tapicer,
Weren with us eeke, clothed in oo lyveré,
Of a solempne and gret fraternité.
Ful freissh and newe *here* gere piked was;
Here knyfes were i-chapud nat with bras,
But al with silver wrought ful clene and wel.
Here gurdles and here pouches every del.
Wel semed eche of hem a fair burgeys,
To sitten in a yeldehalle on the deys.
Every man for the wisdom that he can,
Was schaply for to ben an aldurman.
For catel hadde they inough and rente,
And eek here wyfes wolde it wel assente;
And elles certeyn hadde thei ben to blame.
It is right fair for to be clept *madame*,
And for to go to vigilies al byfore,

And han a mantel rially i-bore.
A Cook thei hadde with hem for the nones,
To boyle chiknes and the mary bones,
And poudre marchaunt tart, and galyngale.
Wel cowde he knowe a draught of Londone ale.
He cowde roste, sethe, broille, and frie,
Make mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
But gret harm was it, as it semede me,
That on his schyne a mormal hadde he;
For blankmanger he made with the beste.
A Schipman was ther, wonyng fer by weste:
For ought I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
He rood upon a rouncy, as he couthe,
In a gowne of faldyng to the kne.
A dagger hangyng on a laas hadde he
Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
The hoote somer had*de* maad his hew al broun;
And certeinly he was a good felawe.
Ful many a draught of wyn had he drawe
From Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.
Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
If that he foughte, and hadde the heigher hand,
By water he sente hem hoom to every land.
But of his craft to rikne wel the tydes,
His stremes and his dangers him bisides,
His herbergh and his mone, his lodemenage,
Ther was non such from Hulle to Cartage.
Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;
With many a tempest hath his berd ben schake,
He knew wel alle the havenes, as thei were,
From Scotlond to the cape of Fynestere,
And every cryk in Bretayne and in Spayne;
His barge y-clepud was the Magdelayne.

Ther was also a Doctour of Phisik,
In al this world ne was ther non him lyk
To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
For he was groundud in astronomye.
He kepte his pacient wondurly wel
In houres by his magik naturel.
Wel cowde he fortune the ascendent
Of his ymages for his pacient.
He knew the cause of every maladye,
Were it of cold, or hete, or moyst, or drye,
And where thei engendrid, and of what humour;
He was a verrey parfight practisour.
The cause i-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
Anon he yaf the syke man his boote.
Ful redy hadde he his apotecaries,
To sende him dragges, and his letuaries,
For eche of hem made othur *for* to wynne;
Here frendschipe was not newe to begynne.
Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
And Deiscorides, and eeke Rufus;
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;
Serapyon, Razis, and Avycen;
Averrois, Damascen, and Constantyn;
Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertyn.
Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluité,
But of gret norisching and digestible.
His studie was but litel on the Bible.
In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al
Lyned with taffata and with sendal.
And yit he was but esy in dispence;
He kepte that he wan in pestilence.
For gold in phisik is a cordial;

Therfore he lovede gold in special.
A good Wif was ther of byside Bathe,
But sche was somdel deef, and that was skathe.
Of cloth-makyng she hadde such an haunt,
Sche passed hem of Ypris and of Gaunt.
In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
That to the offryng byforn hire schulde goon,
And if ther dide, certeyn so wroth was sche,
That sche was thanne out of alle charité.
Hire keverchefs weren ful fyne of grounde;
I durste swere they weyghede ten pounde
That on a Sonday were upon hire heed.
Hir hosen were of fyn scarlett reed,
Ful streyte y-teyed, and schoos ful moyste and newe
Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.
Sche was a worthy womman al hire lyfe,
Housbondes atte chirche dore hadde sche fyfe,
Withouten othur companye in youthe;
But thereof needeth nought to speke as nouthe.
And thries hadde sche ben at Jerusalem;
Sche hadde passud many a straunge streem;
At Rome sche hadde ben, and at Boloyne,
In Galice at seynt Jame, and at Coloyne.
Sche cowde moche of wandryng by the weye.
Gattothud was sche, sothly for to seye.
Uppon an amblere esely sche sat,
Wymplid ful wel, and on hire heed an hat
As brood as is a bocler or a targe;
A foot-mantel aboute hire hupes large,
And on hire feet a paire of spores scharpe.
In felawschipe wel cowde *sche* lawghe and carpe.
Of remedyes of love sche knew parchaunce,
For of that art sche knew the olde daunce.

A good man was ther of religioun,
And was a pore PERSOUN of a toun;
But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
He was also a lerned man, a clerk
That Cristes gospel gladly wolde preche;
His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.
Benigne he was, and wondur diligent,
And in adversite ful pacient;
And such he was i-proved ofte sithes.
Ful loth were him to curse for his tythes,
But rather wolde he yeven out of dowte,
Unto his pore parisschens aboute,
Of his offrynge, and eek of his substaunce.
He cowde in litel thing han suffisance.
Wyd was his parisch, and houses fer asondur,
But he ne lafte not for reyne ne thondur,
In siknesse ne in meschief to visite
The ferrest in his parissche, moche and lite,
Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staf.
This noble ensample unto his scheep he yaf,
That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte,
Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
And this figure he addide yit therto,
That if gold ruste, what schulde yren doo?
For if a prest be foul, on whom we truste,
No wondur is a lewid man to ruste;
And schame it is, if that a prest take kepe,
A schiten schepperd and a clene schepe;
Wel oughte a prest ensample for to yive,
By his clennesse, how that his scheep schulde lyve.
He sette not his benefice to huyre,
And lefte his scheep encombred in the myre,
And ran to Londone, unto seynte Poules,
To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,

Or with a brethurhede be withholde;
But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,
So that the wolf ne made it not myscarye.
He was a schepperde and no mercenarie;
And though he holy were, and vertuous,
He was to senful man nought dispitous,
Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
But in his teching discret and benigne.
To drawe folk to heven by clennesse,
By good ensample, was his busynesse:
But it were eny persone obstinat,
What-so he were of high or lowe estat,
Him wolde he snybbe scharply for the nones.
A bettre preest I trowe ther nowher non is.
He waytud after no pompe ne reverence,
Ne maked him a spiced conscience,
But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.
With *him* ther was a PLOUGHMAN, his brothur,
That hadde i-lad of dong ful many a fothur.
A trewe swynker and a good was hee,
Lyvynge in pees and perfight charitee.
God loved he best with al his trewe herte
At alle tymes, though him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
He wolde threisshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, with every pore wight,
Withouten huyre, if it laye in his might.
His tythes payede he ful faire and wel,
Bathe of his owne swynk and his catel.
In a tabbard *he* rood upon a mere.
Ther was also a reeve and a mellere,
A sompnour and a pardoner also,

A maunciple, and my-self, ther was no mo.
The Mellere was a stout carl for the nones,
Ful big he was of braun, and eek of boones;
That prevede wel, for overal ther he cam,
At wrastlynge he wolde bere awey the ram.
He was schort schuldred, broode, a thikke knarre,
There nas no dore that he nolde heve of harre,
Or breke it with a rennyng with his heed.
His berd as ony sowe or fox was reed,
And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
A werte, and theron stood a tuft of heres,
Reede as the berstles of a souwes eeres.
His nose-thurles blake were and wyde.
A swerd and a bocler baar he by his side,
His mouth as wyde was as a gret forneys.
He was a jangler, and a golyardeys,
And that was most of synne and harlotries.
Wel cowde he stele corn, and tollen thries;
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold pardé.
A whight cote and blewe hood wered he.
A baggepipe cowde he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he brought us out of towne.
A gentil Maunciple was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours mighten take exemple
For to be wys in beyyng of vitaille.
For whethur that he payde, or took by taille,
Algate he waytede so in his acate,
That he was ay biforn and in good state.
Now is not that of God a ful fair grace,
That such a lewed mannes wit schal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lernede men?
Of maystres hadde *he* moo than thries ten.

That were of lawe expert and curious;
Of which ther were a doseyn in an hous,
Worthi to be stiwardz of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engelond,
To make him lyve by his propre good,
In honour detteles, but if he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as he can desire;
And able for to helpen al a schire
In any caas that mighte falle or happe;
And yit this maunciple sette here aller cappe.

The Reeve was a sklendre colerik man,
His berd was schave as neigh as ever he can.
His heer was by his eres *rounde* i-shorn.
His top was dockud lyk a preest biforn.
Ful longe wern his leggus, and ful lene,
Al like a staff, ther was no calf y-sene.
Wel cowde he kepe a gerner and a bynne;
Ther was non auditour cowde on him wynne.
Wel wiste he by the drought, and by the reyn,
The yeeldyng of his seed, and of his greyn.
His lordes scheep, his neet, *and* his dayerie,
His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrie,
Was holly in this reeves governynge,
And by his covenaunt yaf the rekenynge,
Syn that his lord was twenti yeer of age;
Ther couthe noman bringe him in arrerage.
Ther nas baillif, ne herde, ne other hyne,
That they ne knewe his sleight and his covyne;
They were adrad of him, as of the deth.
His wonyng was ful fair upon an heth,
With grene trees i-schadewed was his place.
He cowde bettre than his lord purchace.
Ful riche he was i-stored prively,

His lord wel couthe he plese subtilly,
To yeve and lene him of his owne good,
And have a thank, a cote, and eek an hood.
In youthe he lerned hadde a good mester;
He was a wel good wright, a carpenter.
This reeve sat upon a wel good stot,
That was a pomely gray, and highte Scot.
A long surcote of blew uppon he hadde,
And by his side he bar a rusty bladde.
Of Northfolk was this reeve of which I telle,
Byside a toun men callen Baldeswelle.
Tukkud he was, as is a frere, aboute,
And ever he rood the hynderest of the route.

A Sompnour was ther with us in that place,
That hadde a fyr-reed cherubyns face,
For sawceflem he was, with eyghen narwe.
As hoot he was, and leecherous, as a sparwe,
With skalled browes blak, and piled berd;
Of his visage children weren *sore* aferd.
Ther nas quyksilver, litarge, ne bremstone,
Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,
Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
Ne of the knobbes sittyng on his cheekes.
Wel loved he garleek, oynouns, and ek leekes,
And for to drinke strong wyn reed as blood.
Thanne wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
A fewe termes hadde he, tuo or thre,
That he hadde lerned out of som decree;
No wondur is, he herde it al the day;
And eek ye knowe wel, how that a jay

Can clepe Watte, as wel as can the pope.
But who-so wolde in othur thing him grope,
Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie,
Ay, *Questio quid juris*, wolde he crye,
He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;
A bettre felaw schulde men nowher fynde.
He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felawe *to* han his concubyn
A twelve moneth, and excuse him atte fulle.
And pryvely a fynch eek cowde he pulle.
And if he fond owher a good felawe,
He wolde teche him for to have non awe
In such a caas of the archedeknes curs,
But if a mannes soule were in his purs;
For in his purs he scholde punyssched be.
'Purs is the ercedeknes helle,' quod he.
But wel I woot he lyeth right in dede;
Of cursyng oweth ech gulty man to drede;
For curs wol slee right as assoillyng saveth;
And also ware him of a *significavit*.
In daunger he hadde at his owne assise
The yonge gurles of the diocise,
And knew here counseil, and was al here red
A garland had he set upon his heed,
As gret as it were for an ale-stake;
A bokeler had he maad him of a cake.
With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER
Of Rouncival, his frend and his comper,
That streyt was comen from the court of Rome.
Ful lowde he sang, Come hider, love, to me.
This sompnour bar to him a stif burdoun,
Was nevere trompe of half so gret a soun.
This pardoner hadde heer as yelwe as wex.

But smothe it heng, as doth a strike of flex;
By unces hynge his lokkes that he hadde,
And therwith he his schuldres overspradde.
Ful thinne it lay, by culpons on and oon,
And hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
For it was trussud up in his walet.
Him thought he rood al of the newe get,
Dischevele, sauf his cappe, he rood al bare.
Suche glaryng eyghen hadde he as an hare.
A vernicle hadde he sowed on his cappe.
His walet lay byforn him in his lappe,
Bret-ful of pardoun come from Rome al hoot.
A voys he hadde as smale as eny goot.
No berd ne hadde he, ne never scholde have,
As smothe it was as it ware late i-schave;
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk unto Ware,
Ne was ther such another pardoner.
For in his male he hadde a pilwebeer,
Which, that he saide, was oure lady veyl:
He seide, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That seynt Petur hadde, whan *that* he wente
Uppon the see, til Jhesu Crist him hente.
He hadde a cros of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
But with thise reliques, whanne that he fand
A pore persoun dwellyng uppon land,
Upon a day he gat him more moneye
Than that the persoun gat in monthes tweye.
And thus with feyned flaterie and japes,
He made the persoun and the people his apes.
But trewely to tellen atte laste,
He was in churche a noble ecclesiaste.

Wel cowde he rede a lessoun or a storye,
But altherbest he sang an offertorie;
For wel wyst he, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche, and wel affyle his tunge,
To wynne silver, as he right wel cowde;
Therefore he sang ful meriely and lowde.
Now have I told you schortly in a clause
Thestat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
Why that assembled was this companye
In Southwerk at this gentil ostelrie,
That highte the Tabbard, faste by the Belle.
But now is tyme to yow for to telle
How that we bare us in that ilke night,
Whan we were in that ostelrie alight;
And aftur wol I telle of oure viage,
And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.
But ferst I pray you of your curtesie,
That ye ne rette it nat my vilanye,
Though that I speke al pleyn in this matere,
To telle you here wordes and here cheere;
Ne though I speke here wordes propurly.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,
Who-so schal telle a tale aftur a man,
He moste reherce, as neigh as ever he can,
Every word, if it be in his charge,
Al speke he never so rudely ne large;
Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thing, or fynde his wordes newe.
He may not spare, though he were his brothur;
He moste as wel sey oo word as anothur.
Crist spak himself ful broode in holy writ,
And wel ye woot no vilanye is it.
Eke Plato seith, who-so that can him rede,

The wordes mot be cosyn to the dede.
Also I pray you to foryeve it me,
Al have I folk nat set in here degre
Here in this tale, as that thei schulde stonde;
My witt is thynne, ye may wel undurstonde.
Greet cheere made oure ost us everichon,
And to the souper sette he us anon;
And served us with vitaille atte beste.
Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.
A semely man oure ooste was withalle
For to han been a marchal in an halle;
A large man was he with eyghen stepe,
A fairere burgeys is ther noon in Chepe:
Bold of his speche, and wys, and wel i-taught,
And of manhede lakkede he right naught.
Eke therto he was right a mery man,
And after soper playen he bygan,
And spak of myrthe among othur thinges,
Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges;
And sayde thus: 'Lo, lordynges, trewely
Ye ben to me right welcome hertily:
For by my trouthe, if that I schal not lye,
I ne saugh this yeer so mery a companye
At oones in this herbergh as is now.
Fayn wold I do yow merthe, wiste I how.
And of a merthe I am right now bythought,
To doon you eese, and it schal coste nought.
Ye goon to Caunturbury; God you speede,
The blisful martir quyte you youre meede!
And wel I woot, as ye gon by the weye,
Ye schapen yow to talken and to pleye;
For trewely comfort ne merthe is noon
To ryde by the weye domb as a stoon;

And therfore wol I make you disport,
As I seyde erst, and do you som confort.
And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
Now for to standen at my juggement;
And for to werken as I schal you seye,
To morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,
Now by my fadres soule that is deed,
But ye be merye, smyteth of myn heed.
Hold up youre hond withoute more speche.'
Oure counseil was not longe for to seche;
Us thoughte it nas nat worth to make it wys,
And graunted him withoute more avys,
And bad him seie his verdite, as him leste.
'Lordynges,' quoth he, 'now herkeneth for the beste;
But taketh not, I pray you, in disdayn;
This is the poynt, to speken schort and playn,
That ech of yow to schorte with youre weie,
In this viage, schal telle tales tweye,
To Caunturburi-ward, I mene it so,
And hom-ward he schal tellen othur tuo,
Of aventures that ther han bifalle.
And which of yow that bereth him best of alle,
That is to seye, that telleth in this caas
Tales of best sentence and of solas,
Schal han a soper at your alther cost
Here in this place sittynge by this post,
Whan that we comen ageyn from Canturbery.
And for to make you the more mery,
I wol myselven gladly with you ryde,
Right at myn owen cost, and be youre gyde.
And who-so wole my juggement withseie
Schal paye for al we spenden by the weye.

And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,
Telle me anoon, withouten wordes moo,
And I wole erely schappe me therfore.'
This thing was graunted, and oure othus swore
With ful glad herte, and prayden him also
That he would vouchesauf for to doon so,
And that he wolde ben oure governour,
And of our tales jugge and reportour,
And sette a souper at a certeyn prys;
And we wolde rewled be at his devys,
In heygh and lowe; and thus by oon assent
We been acorded to his juggement.
And therupon the wyn was fet anoon;
We dronken, and to reste wente echoon,
Withouten eny lengere taryinge.
A morwe whan that the day bigan to sprynge,
Up roos oure ost, and was oure althur cok,
And gaderud us togider alle in a flok,
And forth we riden a litel more than paas,
Unto the waterynge of seint Thomas.
And there oure ost bigan his hors areste,
And seyde, 'Lordus, herkeneth if yow leste.
Ye woot youre forward, and I it you recorde.
If eve-song and morwe-song acorde,
Let se now who schal telle ferst a tale.
As evere I moote drinke wyn or ale,
Who-so be rebel to my juggement
Schal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
Now draweth cut, er that we forther twynne;
Which that hath the schortest schal bygynne.'
'Sire knight,' quoth he, 'maister and my lord,
Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
Cometh ner,' quoth he, 'my lady prioresse;

And ye, sir clerk, lat be your schamfastnesse,
Ne studieth nat; ley hand to, every man.'
Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
And schortly for to tellen as it was,
Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,
The soth is this, the cut fil to the knight,
Of which ful glad and blithe was every wight;
And telle he moste his tale as was resoun,
By forward and by composicioun,
As ye han herd; what needeth wordes moo?
And whan this goode man seigh that it was so,
As he that wys was and obedient
To kepe his forward by his fre assent,
He seyde: 'Syn I schal bygynne the game,
What! welcome be thou cut, a Goddus name!
Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.'
And with that word we riden forth oure weye;
And he bigan with right a merie chere
His tale, and seide right in this manere.

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

WHILOM, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duk that highte Theseus;
Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther non under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contré hadde he wonne;
That with his wisdam and his chivalrie
He conquered al the regne of Femynye.

That whilom was i-cleped Cithea ;
And weddede the queen Ipolita,
And brought hire hoom with him in his contré,
With moche glorie and gret solempnité,
And eek hire yonge suster Emelye.
And thus with victorie and with melodye
Lete I this noble duk to Athenes ryde,
And al his ost, in armes him biside.
And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
I wolde han told yow fully the manere,
How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
By Theseus, and by his chivalrye ;
And of the grete bataille for the nones
Bytwix Athenes and the Amazones ;
And how asegid was Ypolita,
The faire hardy quyen of Cithea ;
And of the feste that was at hire weddynge,
And of the tempest at hire hoom comynge ;
But al that thing I most as now forbere.
I have, God wot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke ben the oxen in my plough,
The remenaunt of the tale is long inough ;
I wol not lette eek non of al this rowte
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
And lat see now who schal the soper wynne,
And ther I lafte, I wolde agayn begynne.

This duk, of whom I make mencioun,
Whan he was comen almost unto the toun,
In al his wele and in his moste pryde,
He was war, as he cast his eyghe aside,
Wher that ther kneled in the hye weye
A companye of ladies, tweye and tweye,
Ech after other, clad in clothes blake ;

But such a cry and such a woo they make,
That in this world nys creature lyvynge,
That herde such another weymentynge,
And of that cry ne wolde they never stenten,
Til they the reynes of his bridel henten.
'What folk be ye that at myn hom comynge
Pertourben so my feste with cryenge?'
Quod Theseus, 'have ye so gret envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crie?
Or who hath yow misboden, or offendid?
And telleth me if it may ben amendid;
And why that ye ben clad thus al in blak?'
The oldest lady of hem alle spak,
When sche hadde swowned with a dedly chere,
That it was routhe for to seen or heere;
And seyde: 'Lord, to whom Fortune hath yeven
Victorie, and as a conquerour to lyven,
Noughte greveth us youre glorie and honour;
But we beseken mercy and socour.
Have mercy on oure woo and oure distresse.
Som drope of pitee, thurgh youre gentilnesse,
Uppon us wrecchede wommen lat thou falle.
For certus, lord, ther nys noon of us alle,
That sche nath ben a duchesse or a queene;
Now be we caytifs, as it is wel seene:
Thanked be Fortune, and hire false wheel,
That noon estat assureth to ben weel.
And certus, lord, to abiden youre presence
Here in the temple of the goddesse Clemence
We han ben waytynge al this fourtenight;
Now helpe us, lord, syn it is in thy might.
I wrecche, which that wepe and waylle thus,
Was whilom wyf to kyng Capaneus,

That starf at Thebes, cursed be that day!
And alle we that ben in this array,
And maken alle this lamentacioun!
We leften alle oure housbondes at the toun,
Whil that the sege ther aboute lay.
And yet the olde Creon, welaway!
That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
Fulfilde of ire and of iniquité,
He for despyt, and for his tyrannye,
To do the deede bodyes vilonye,
Of alle oure lordes, which that ben i-slawe,
Hath alle the bodies on an heep y-drawe,
And wol not suffren hem by noon assent
Nother to ben y-buried nor i-brent,
But maketh houndes ete hem in despite.'
And with that word, withoute more respite,
They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,
'Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy,
And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte.'
This gentil duke doun from his courser sterte
With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.
Him thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
Whan he seyh hem so pitous and so maat,
That whilom weren of so gret estat.
And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
And hem conforteth in ful good entente;
And swor his oth, as he was trewe knight,
He wolde do so ferforthly his might
Upon the tyraunt Creon hem to wreke,
That al the people of Grece scholde speke
How Creon was of Theseus y-served,
As he that hath his deth right wel deserved.
And right anoon, withoute eny abood

His baner he desplayeth, and forth rood
To Thebes-ward, and al his oost bysyde;
No ner Athenes wolde he go ne ryde,
Ne take his eese fully half a day,
But onward on his way that nyght he lay;
And sente anoon Ypolita the queene,
And Emelye hir yonge suster schene,
Unto the toun of Athenes to dwelle;
And forth he ryt; ther is no more to telle.

The reede statue of Mars with spere and targe
So schyneth in his white baner large,
That alle the feeldes gliteren up and doun;
And by his baner was born his pynoun
Of gold ful riche, in which ther was i-bete
The Minatour which that he slough in Crete.
Thus ryt this duk, thus ryt this conquerour,
And in his oost of chevalrie the flour,
Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
Fayre in a feeld wher as he thoughte to fighte.
But schortly for to speken of this thing,
With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
He faught, and slough him manly as a knight
In pleyn bataille, and putte his folk to flight;
And by assaut he wan the cité aftur,
And rente doun bothe wal, and sparre, and raftur;
And to the ladies he restored agayn
The bones of here housbondes that were slayn,
To do exequies, as was tho the gyse.
But it were al to long for to devyse
The grete clamour and the waymentynge
Which that the ladies made at the brennynge
Of the bodyes, and the grete honour
That Theseus the noble conquerour

Doth to the ladyes, whan they from him wente.
But schortly for to telle is myn entente.
Whan that this worthy duk, this Theseus,
Hath Creon slayn, and Thebes wonne thus,
Stille in the feelde he took al night his reste,
And dide with al the contré as him leste.

To ransake in the cas of bodyes dede
Hem for to streepe of herneys and of wede,
The pilours diden businesse and cure,
After the bataile and discomfiture.
And so byfil, that in the cas thei founde,
Thurgh girt with many a grevous blody wounde,
Two yonge knightes liggyng by and by,
Both in oon armes clad ful richely;
Of whiche two, Arcite hight that oon,
And that othur knight hight Palamon.
Nat fully quyk, ne fully deed they were,
But by here coote armure, and by here gere,
Heraudes knewe hem wel in special,
As they that weren of the blood real
Of Thebes, and of sistren tuo i-born.
Out of the chaas the pilours han hem torn,
And han hem caried softe unto the tente
Of Theseus, and ful sone he hem sente
Tathenes, for to dwellen in prisoun
Perpetuelly, he wolde no raunceoun.
And this duk whan he hadde thus i-doon,
He took his host, and hom he ryt anoon
With laurer crowned as a conquerour;
And there he lyveth in joye and in honour
Terme of his lyf; what wolle ye wordes moo?
And in a tour, in angwische and in woo,
This Palamon, and his felawe Arcite,

For evermo, ther may no gold hem quyte.
This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
Til it fel oones in a morwe of May
That Emelie, that fairer was to seene
Than is the lilie on hire stalkes grene.
And fresscher than the May with floures newe—
For with the rose colour strof hire hewe,
I not which was the *fairer* of hem two—
Er it was day, as sche was wont to do,
Sche was arisen, and al redy dight;
For May wole have no sloggardye a nyght.
The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
And maketh him out of his sleepe sterte,
And seith, 'Arys, and do thin observance.'
This maked Emelye han remembrance
To do honour to May, and for to ryse.
I-clothed was sche fressh for to devyse.
Hire yolwe heer was browdid in a tresse,
Byhynde hire bak, a yerde long I gesse.
And in the gardyn at the sonne upriste
Sche walketh up and doun wher as hire liste.
Sche gadereth floures, party whyte and reede,
To make a *sotil* gerland for hire heede,
And as an aungel hevenly sche song.
The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
Which of the castel was the cheef dongeoun,
(Ther as this knightes weren in prisoun,
Of which I tolde yow, and telle schal)
Was evene joynyng to the gardeyn wal,
Ther as this Emely hadde hire pleyynge,
Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,
And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
As was his wone, by leve of his gayler

Was risen, and romed in a chambre on heigh,
In which he al the noble cité seigh,
And eek the gardeyn, ful of braunches grene,
Ther as the fresshe Emelye the scheene
Was in hire walk, and romed up and doun.
This sorweful prisoner, this Palamon,
Gooth in the chambre romyng to and fro,
And to himself compleynyng of his woo;
That he was born, ful ofte he seyd, alas!
And so byfel, by aventure or cas,
That thurgh a wyndow thikke and many a barre
Of iren greet and squar as eny sparre,
He cast his eyen upon Emelya,
And therwithal he bleynte and cryed, a!
As that he stongen were unto the herte.
And with that crye Arcite anon up sterte,
And seyde, 'Cosyn myn, what eyleth the,
That art so pale and deedly for to see?
Why crydestow? who hath the doon offence?
For Goddes love, tak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may non othir be;
Fortune hath yeven us this adversité.
Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun,
Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
So stood the heven whan that we were born;
We moste endure it: this is the schort and pleyn.

This Palamon answered, and seyde ageyn,
'Cosyn, for-sothe of this opynyoun
Thou hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
This prisoun causede me not for to crye.
But I was hurt right now thurgh myn yhe
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.

The fairnesse of the lady that I see
Yonde in the gardyn rom*ynge* to and fro,
Is cause of *al* my cryying and my wo.
I not whethur sche be womman or goddesse;
But Venus is it, sothly as I gesse.'
And therwithal on knees adoun he fil,
And seyde: 'Venus, if it be youre wil
Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure,
Biforn me sorwful wrecched creature,
Out of this prisoun help that we may scape.
And if so be oure destyné be schape,
By eterne word to deyen in prisoun,
Of oure lynage haveth sum compassioun,
That is so lowe y-brought by tyrannye.'
And with that word Arcite gan espye
Wher as this lady romed to and fro.
And with that sight hire beauté hurt him so,
That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
And with a sigh he seyde pitously:
'The freissche beauté sleeth me sodeynly
Of hir that rometh yonder in the place;
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace
That I may see hir atte leste weye,
I nam but deed; ther nys no more to seye.
This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
Dispitously he loked, and answerde:
'Whether seistow in ernest or in pley?'
'Nay,' quoth Arcite, 'in ernest in good fey.
God helpe me so, me luste ful evele pleye.'
This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye:
'Hit nere,' quod he, 'to the no gret honour,
For to be fals, ne for to be traytour

To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
I-swore ful deepe, and ech of us to other,
That never for to deyen in the payne,
Til that deeth departe schal us twayne,
Neyther of us in *love* to hynder other,
Ne in non other cas, my leeve brother;
But that thou schuldest trewly forther me
In every caas, and I schal forther the.
This was thyn othe, and myn eek certayn;
I wot right wel, thou darst it nat withsayn.
Thus art thou of my counseil out of doute.
And now thou woldest falsly ben aboute
To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
And evere schal, unto myn herte sterve.
Now certes, fals Arcite, thou schal not so.
I loved hir first, and tolde the my woo
As to my counseil, and to brother sworn
To forther me, as I have told biforn.
For which thou art i-bounden as a knight
To helpe me, if it lay in thi might,
Or elles art thou fals, I dar wel sayn.'
This Arcite ful proudly spak agayn.
'Thou schalt,' quoth he, 'be rather fals than I.
But thou art fals, I telle the uttirly.
For *par amour* I loved hir first then thow.
What wolt thou sayn? thou wost not yit now
Whether sche be a womman or goddesse.
Thyn is affeccioun of holynesse,
And myn is love, as of a creature;
For which I tolde the myn adventure
As to my cosyn, and my brother sworn.
I pose, that thou lovedest hire biforn;
Wost thou nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,

That who schal yeve a lover eny lawe,
Love is a grettere lawe, by my pan,
Then may be yeve to eny erthly man?
Therfore posityf lawe, and such decré,
Is broke alway for love in ech degree.
A man moot needes love maugre his heed.
He may nought fle it, though he schulde be deed,
Al be sche mayde, or be sche widewe or wyf.
And *eke* it is nat likly al thy lyf
To stonden in hire grace, no more schal I;
For wel thou wost thyselven verrily,
That thou and I been dampned to prisoun
Perpetuelly, us gayneth no raunsoun.
We stryve, as doth the houndes for the boon,
They foughte al day, and yit here part was noon;
Ther com a kyte, whil that they were wrothe,
And bar awey the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,
Eche man for himself, ther is non other.
Love if the liste; for I love and ay schal;
And sothly, leeve brother, this is al.
Here in this prisoun moote we endure,
And every of us take his aventure.'
Gret was the stryf and long bytwixe hem tweye,
If that I hadde leysir for to seye;
But to the effect. It happed on a day,
(To telle it yow as schortly as I may)
A worthy duk that highte Perotheus,
That felaw was to the duk Theseus
Syn thilke day that they were children lyte,
Was come to Athenes, his felawe to visite,
And for to pley, as he was wont to do,
For in this world he lovede noman so:

And he loved him as tendurly agayn.
So wel they loved, as olde bookes sayn,
That whan *that* oon was deed, sothly to telle,
His felawe wente and sought him doun in helle;
But of that story lyste me nought to write.
Duk Perotheus lovede wel Arcite,
And hadde him knowe at Thebes yeer by yeer:
And fynally at requeste and prayer
Of Perotheus, withoute any raunsoun
Duk Theseus him leet out of prisoun,
Frely to go, wher him lust overal,
In such a gyse, as I you telle schal.
This was the forward, playnly to endite,
Betwixe Theseus and him Arcite:
That if so were, that Arcite were founde
Evere in his lyf, by daye or night, or stound
In eny contré of this Theseus,
And he were caught, it was acorded thus,
That with a swerd he scholde lese his heed;
Ther nas noon other remedy ne reed,
But took his leeve, and homward he him spedde;
Let him be war, his nekke lith to wedde.

How gret a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
The deth he feleth thorugh his herte smyte;
He weepeth, weyleth, cryeth pitously;
To slen himself he wayteth pryvyly.
He seyde, 'Allas the day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun werse than was biforn;
Now is me schape eternally to dwelle
Nought in purgatorie, but in helle.
Allas! that ever knewe I Perotheus!
For elles had I dweld with Theseus
I-fetered in his prisoun for evere moo.

Than had I ben in blis, and nat in woo.
Oonly the sight of hir, whom that I serve,
Though that I hir grace may nat deserve,
Wold han sufficed right ynough for me.
O dere cosyn Palamon,' quod he,
'Thyn is the victoire of this aventure,
Ful blisfully in prisoun to endure;
In prisoun? nay, certes but in paradys!
Wel hath fortune y-torned the *the* dys,
That hath the sight of hir, and I the absence.
For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,
And art a knight, a worthi and an able,
That by som cas, syn fortune is chaungable,
Thou maist to thy desir somtyme atteyne.
But I that am exiled, and bareyne
Of alle grace, and in so gret despeir,
That ther nys water, erthe, fyr, ne eyr,
Ne creature, that of hem maked is,
That may me helpe ne comfort in this.
Wel ought I sterve in wanhope and distresse;
Farwel my lyf and al my jolynesse.
Allas! why playnen folk so in comune
Of purveance of God, or of fortune,
That yeveth him ful ofte in many a gyse
Wel better than thei can hemself devyse?
Som man desireth for to have richesse,
That cause is of his morthre or gret seeknesse.
And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
That in his hous is of his mayné slayn.
Infinite harmes ben in this mateere;
We wote nevere what thing we prayen heere.
We faren as he that dronke is as a mows.
A dronke man wot wel he hath an hous,

But he not nat which the righte wey is thider,
And to a dronke man the wey is slider,
And certes in this world so faren we.
We seeken faste after felicite,
But we gon wrong ful ofte trewely.
Thus may we seyen alle, and namely I,
That wende have had a gret opinioun,
That yif I mighte skape fro prisoun,
Than had I be in joye and perfyt hele,
Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
Syn that I may not se yow, Emelye,
I nam but deed; ther nys no remedye."
Uppon that other syde Palomon,
Whan he wiste that Arcite was agoon,
Such sorwe maketh, that the grete tour
Resowneth of his yollyng and clamour.
The pure feteres of his schynes grete
Weren of his bitter salte teres wete.
'Allas!' quod he, 'Arcita, cosyn myn,
Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thin.
Thow walkest now in Thebes at thi large,
And of my woo thou yevest litel charge.
Thou maiste, *syn* thou hast wysdom and manhede,
Assemble al the folk of oure kynrede,
And make a werre so scharpe in this cité,
That by som aventure, or by som treté,
Thou mayst hire wynne to lady and to wyf.
For whom that I moste needes leese my lyf.
For as by wey of possibilité,
Syn thou art at thi large of prisoun free,
And art a lord, gret is thin avantage,
More than is myn, that sterve here in a kage.
For I moot weepe and weyle, whil *that* I lyve,

With al the woo that prisoun may me yyve,
And eek with peyne that love me yeveth also,
That doubleth al my *torment* and my wo.'
Therwith the fuyr of jelousye upsterte
Withinne his brest, and hent him by the herte
So wodly, that lik was he to byholde
The box-tree, or the asschen deed and colde.
Tho seyde he; 'O goddes cruel, that governe
This world with byndyng *of youre* word eterne,
And writen in the table of athamaunte
Youre parlement and youre eterne graunte,
What is mankynde more to yow holde
Than is a scheep, that rouketh in the folde?
For slayn is man right as another beste,
And dwelleth eek in prisoun and arreste,
And hath seknesse, and greet adversité,
And ofte tymes gilteles, pardé.
What governaunce is in youre prescience,
That gilteles tormenteth innocence?
And yet encreceth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce
For Goddes sake to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beste may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beste is deed, he ne hath no peyne;
But man after his deth moot wepe and pleyne,
Though in this world he have care and woo:
Withouten doute it may stonde so.
The answer of this I lete to divinis,
But wel I woot, that in this world gret pyne is.
Allas! I se a serpent or a theef,
That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
Gon at his large, and wher him luste may turne.
But I moste be in prisoun thurgh Saturne,

And eek thorugh Juno, jalous and eke wood,
That hath destruyed wel neyh al the blood
Of Thebes, with his waste walles wyde.
And Venus sleeth me on that other syde
For jelousye, and fere of him Arcyte.'
Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
And lete him stille in his prisoun dwelle,
And of Arcita forth than wol I telle.
The somer passeth, and the nightes longe
Encrescen double wise the peynes stronge
Bothe of the lover and the prisoner.
I noot which hath the wofullere cheer.
For schortly for to sey, this Palomon
Perpetuelly is dampned in prisoun,
In cheynes and in feteres to be deed;
And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
For evere mo as out of that contré,
Ne nevere mo schal he his lady see.
Now lovyeres axe I this question,
Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palomon?
That on may se his lady day by day,
But in prisoun he moot dwelle alway.
That other may wher him luste ryde or go,
But seen his lady schal he never mo.
Now deemeth as you luste, ye that can,
For I wol telle forth as I bigan.
Whan that Arcite to Thebes come was,
Ful ofte a day he swelde and seyde alas!
For seen his lady schal he never mo.
And schortly to concluden al his wo,
So moche sorwe hadde never creature.
That is or schal whil that the world wol dure.
His sleep, his mete, his drynk is him byraft,

That lene he wexe, and drye as eny schaft.
His eyen holwe, grisly to biholde;
His hewe falwe, and pale as asschen colde,
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And dwellyng al the night, making his moone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Then wolde he wepe, he mighte nought be stent;
So feble were his spirites, and so lowe.
And chaunged so, that no man couthe knowe
His speche nother his vois, though men it herde.
And in his gir, for al the world he ferde
Nought oonly lyke the lovers maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lik manye,
Engendrud of humour malencolyk,
Byforne in his selle fantastyk.
And schortly turned was al up-so-doun
Bothe abyt and eek disposicioun
Of him, this woful lovere daun Arcite.
What schulde I alway of his wo endite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or tuoo
In this cruel torment, *and this* peyne and woo,
At Thebes, in his contré, as I seyde,
Upon a night in sleep as he him leyde,
Him thoughte that how the wenged god Mercurie
Byforn him stood, and bad him to be murye.
His slepy yerd in hond he bar upright;
An hat he wered upon his heres bright.
Arrayed was this god (as he took keepe)
As he was whan that Argous took his sleep;
And seyde *him thus:* 'To Athenes schalt thou wende;
Ther is the schapen of thy wo an ende.'
And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
'Now trewely how sore that me smerte.'

Quod he, 'to Athenes right now wol I fare;
Ne for the drede of deth schal I not spare
To see my lady, that I love and serve;
In hire presence I recche nat to sterve.'
And with that word he caught a gret myrour,
And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
And saugh his visage was in another kynde.
And right anoon it ran him into mynde.
That seththen his face was so disfigured
Of maladie the which he hath endured,
He mighte wel, if that he bar him lowe,
Lyve in Athenes evere more unknowe,
And see his lady wel neih day by day.
And right anon he chaunged his aray,
And clothed him as a pore laborer.
And al alone, save oonly a squyer,
That knew his pryvyté and al his cas,
Which was disgysed povrely as he was,
To Athenes is he go the nexte way.
And to the court he went upon a day,
And at the gate he profred his servyse,
To drugge and drawe, what-so men wolde devyse.
And schortly on this matier for to seyn,
He fel in office with a chambirleyn,
The which that dwellyng was with Emelye.
For he was wys, and couthe sone aspye
Of every servaunt, which that served here.
Wel couthe he hewe woode, and water bere,
For he was yonge and mighty for the nones,
And therto he was long and bygge of bones
To doon that eny wight can him devyse.
A yeer or two he was in this servise,
Page of the chambre of Emelye the brighte;

And Philostrate he seide that he hight*e*.
But half so wel byloved a man as he
Ne was ther never in court of his degree.
He was so gentil of his condicioun,
That thoruhout al the court was his renoun.
They seyde that it were a charité
That Theseus would enhaunsen his degree,
And putten him in worschipful servyse,
Ther as he might his vertu excersise.
And thus withinne a while his name spronge
Bothe of his dedes, and of goode tonge,
That Theseus hath taken him so neer
That of his chambre he made him squyer,
And yaf him gold to mayntene his degree;
And eek men brought him out of his countré
Fro yeer to yer ful pryvyly his rente;
But honestly and sleighly he it spente,
That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
And thre yeer in this wise his lyf he ladde,
And bar him so in pees and eek in werre,
Ther nas no man that Theseus hath so derre.
And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wole of Palomon a lyte.
In derknes and orrible and strong prisoun
This seven yeer hath seten Palomon,
Forpyned, what for woo and for destresse,
Who feleth double sorwe and hevynesse
But Palamon? that love destreyneth so,
That wood out of his witt he goth for wo;
And eek therto he is a prisoner
Perpetuelly, nat oonly for a yeer.
Who couthe ryme in Englissch propurly
His martirdam? for-sothe it am nat I;

Therfore I passe as lightly as I may.
It fel that in the seventhe yeer in May
The thridde night, (as olde bookes seyn,
That al this storie tellen more pleyn)
Were it by aventure or destené,
(As, whan a thing is schapen, it schal be,)
That soone aftur the mydnyght, Palamoun
By helpyng of a freend brak his prisoun,
And fleeth the cite fast as he may goo,
For he ha*de* yive drinke his gayler soo
Of a clarre, maad of *a* certeyn wyn,
With nercotykes and opye of Thebes fyn,
That al that nightthough that men wolde him schake,
The gayler sleep, he mighte nought awake.
And thus he fleeth as fast as ever he may.
The night was schort, and faste by the day,
That needes cost he moste himselven hyde,
And til a grove ther faste besyde
With dredful foot than stalketh Palomoun.
For schortly this was his opynyoun,
That in that grove he wolde him hyde al day,
And in the night then wolde he take his way
To Thebes-ward, his frendes for to preye
On Theseus to helpe him to werreye.
And shortelich, or he wolde lese his lyf,
Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf.
This is theffect of his entente playn.
Now wol I torne unto Arcite agayn,
That litel wiste how nyh that was his care,
Til that fortune hath brought him in the snare.

The busy larke, messager of *day*,
Salueth in hire song the morwe gray;
And fyry Phebus ryseth up so bright,

That al the orient laugheth of the light,
And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
The silver dropes, hongyng *on* the leeves.
And Arcite, that is in the court ryal
With Theseus, his squyer principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the mery day.
And for to doon his observance to May,
Remembryng of the poynt of his desire,
He on his courser, stertyng as the fire,
Is riden into feeldes him to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove, of which that I yow tolde,
By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
To make him a garland of the greves,
Were it of woodewynde or hawthorn leves,
And lowde he song ayens the sonne scheene:
'May, with al thyn floures and thy greene,
Welcome be thou, wel faire freissche May!
I hope that I som grene gete may.'
And fro his courser, with a lusty herte,
Into the grove ful lustily he sterte,
And in a pathe he romed up and doun,
Ther by aventure this Palamoun
Was in a busche, that no man might him see.
Ful sore afered of his deth was he,
Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite:
God wot he wolde have trowed it ful lite.
For soth is seyde, goon ful many yeres,
That feld hath eyen, and the woode hath eeres.
It is ful fair a man to bere him evene,
For al day meteth men atte unset stevene.
Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,
That was so neih to herken of his sawe,

For in the busche he stynteth now ful stille.
Whan that Arcite hadde romed al his fille,
And songen al the roundel lustily,
Into a studie he fel sodeynly,
As doth thes lovers in here queynte geeres,
Now in the croppe, now doun in the breres,
Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.
Right as the Friday, sothly for to telle,
Now it schyneth, now it reyneth faste,
Right so gan gery Venus overcaste
The hertes of hire folk, right as hir day
Is *gerful*, right so chaungeth hire aray.
Selde is the Fryday al the wyke i-like.
Whan that Arcite hadde songe, he gan to sike,
And sette him doun withouten eny more:
'Alas!' quod he, 'that day that I was bore!
How longe Juno, thurgh thy cruelté
Wiltow werreyen Thebes the citee?
Allas! i-brought is to confusioun
The blood royal of Cadme and Amphioun;
Of Cadynus, the which was the furst man
That Thebes bulde, or first the toun bygan,
And of that cité first was crowned kyng,
Of his lynage am I, and his ofspring
By verray lyne, and of his stok ryal:
And now I am so caytyf and so thral,
That he that is my mortal enemy,
I serve him as his squyer povrely.
And yet doth Juno me wel more schame,
For I dar nought byknowe myn owne name,
But ther as I was wont to hote Arcite,
Now hoote I Philostrate, nought worth a myte.
Allas! thou felle Mars, allas! Juno,

Thus hath youre ire owre lynage fordo,
Save oonly me, and wrecchid Palomon,
That Theseus martyreth in prisoun.
And over al this, to slee me utterly,
Love hath his fyry dart so brennyngly
I-stykid thorugh my trewe careful herte,
That schapen was my deth erst than my scherte.
Ye slen me with youre eyhen, Emelye;
Ye ben the cause wherfore that I dye.
Of al the remenant of al myn other care
Ne sette I nought the mountaunce of a tare,
So that I couthe do ought to youre pleasaunce.'
And with that word he fel doun in a traunce
A longe tyme; and aftirward upsterte
This Palamon, that thoughte thurgh his herte
He felt a cold swerd sodeynliche glyde;
For ire he quook, he nolde no lenger abyde.
And whan that he hath herd Arcites tale,
As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
He sterte him up out of the bussches thikke,
And seyde: 'Arcyte, false traitour wikke,
Now art thou hent, that lovest my lady so,
For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
And art my blood, and to my counseil sworn,
As I ful ofte have told the heere byforn,
And hast byjaped here the duke Theseus,
And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus;
I wol be deed, or elles thou schalt dye.
Thou schalt not love my lady Emelye,
But I wil love hire oonly and no mo;
For I am Palomon thy mortal fo.
And though that I no wepen have in this place,
But out of prisoun am y-stert by grace,

I drede not that other thou schalt dye,
Or thou ne schalt not love Emelye.
Chese which thou wilt, for thou schalt not asterte.'
This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
Whan he him knew, and had his tale herde,
As fers as a lyoun pulleth out a swerde.
And seide thus: 'By God that sitteth above,
Nere it that thou art sike and wood for love,
And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
Thou scholdest never out of this grove pace,
That thou ne schuldest deyen of myn hond.
For I defye the seurté and the bond
Which that thou seyst I have maad to the.
For, verray fool, thenk that love is fre;
And I wol love hire mawgre al thy might.
But, for thou art a gentil perfight knight,
And wenest to dereyne hire by batayle,
Have heere my trouthe, to morwe I nyl not fayle,
Withouten wityng of eny other wight,
That heer I wol be founden as a knight,
And bryngen harneys right inough for the;
And ches the best, and lef the worst for me.
And mete and drynke this night wil I bryng*e*
Inough for the, and cloth for thy beddynge.
And if so be that thou my lady wynne,
And sle me in this wood that I am inne,
Thou maist wel have thy lady as for me.'
This Palomon answereth, 'I graunt it the.'
And thus they ben departed til a-morwe,
Whan ech of hem hadd*e* leyd his feith to borwe
O Cupide, out of al charité!
O regne, that wolt no felaw have with the
Ful soth is seyde, that love ne lordschipe

Wol not, his thonkes, have no felaschipe.
Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
Arcite is riden anon to the toun,
And on the morwe, or it were day light,
Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,
Bothe sufficaunt and mete to darreyne
The batayl in the feeld betwix hem tweyne.
And on his hors, alone as he was born,
He caryed al this harneys him byforn;
And in the grove, at tyme and place i-sette,
This Arcite and this Palamon ben mette.
Tho chaungen gan here colour in here face.
Right as the *honter* in the regne of Trace
That stondeth in the gappe with a spere,
Whan honted is the lyoun or the bere,
And hereth him comyng in the greves,
And breketh bothe the bowes and the leves,
And thenketh, 'Here cometh my mortel enemy,
Withoute faile, he mot be deed or I;
For eyther I mot slen him at the gappe,
Or he moot slee me, if it me myshappe:'
So ferden they, in chaungyng of here hew,
As fer as eyther of hem other knew.
Ther nas no good day, ne no saluyng;
But streyt withouten wordes rehersyng,
Every of hem helpeth to armen other,
As frendly as he were his owen brother;
And thanne with here scharpe speres stronge
They foyneden ech at other wonder longe.
Tho it semede that this Palomon
In his fightyng were as a wood lyoun,
And as a cruel tygre was Arcite:
As wilde boores gonne they *to* smyte,

That frothen white as fome, *for ire* wood.
Up to the ancle they faught in here blood.
And in this wise I lete hem fightyng welle;
And forthere I wol of Theseus telle.
The destiné, mynistre general,
That *executeth* in the world overal
The purveans, that God hath seye byforn;
So strong it is, that they the world had*de* sworn
The contrary of a thing by ye or nay,
Yet som tyme it schal falle upon a day
That falleth nought eft in a thousend yeere.
For certeynly oure appetites heere,
Be it of *werre*, *or* pees, other hate, or love,
Al is it reuled by the sight above.
This mene I now by mighty Theseus,
That for to honte is so desirous,
And namely the grete hert in May,
That in his bed ther daweth him no day,
That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
With hont and horn, and houndes him byside.
For in his hontyng hath he such delyt,
That *it* is *al* his joye and appetyt
To been himself the grete hertes bane,
For after *Mars* he serveth now Dyane.
Cleer was the day, as I have told or this,
And Theseus, with alle joye and blys,
With his Ypolita, the fayre queene,
And Emelye, clothed al in greene,
On hontyng be thay riden ryally.
And to the grove, that stood ther faste by,
In which ther was an hert as men him tolde,
Duk Theseus the streyte wey hath holde.
And to the launde he rydeth him ful right,

There was the hert y-wont to have his flight,
And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
This duk wol have of him a cours or tweye
With houndes, which as him luste to comaunde.
And whan this duk was come into the launde,
Under the sonne he loketh, right anon
He was war of Arcite and Palomon,
That foughten breeme, as it were boores tuo
The brighte swerdes wente to and fro
So hidously, that with the leste strook
It seemeth as it wolde felle an ook;
But what they were, nothing yit he woot.
This duk with spores his courser he smoot,
And at a stert he was betwixt hem tuoo,
And pullid out a swerd and cride, 'Hoo!
Nomore, up peyne of leesyng of your heed.
By mighty Mars, anon he schal be deed,
That smyteth eny strook, that I may seen!
But telleth me what mestir men ye been,
That ben so hardy for to fighten heere
Withoute jugge or other officere,
As it were in a lyste really?'
This Palamon answerde hastily,
And seyde: 'Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
We han the deth deserved bothe tuo.
Tuo woful wrecches been we, and kaytyves,
That ben encombred of oure owne lyves;
And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
Ne yeve us neyther mercy ne refuge.
And sle me first, for seynte charité;
But sle my felaw eek as wel as me.
Or sle him first; for, though thou knowe him lyte,
This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,

That fro thy lond is banyscht on his heed,
For which he hath i-served to be deed.
For this is he that come to thi gate
And seyde, that he highte Philostrate.
Thus hath he japed the many a yer,
And thou hast maad of him thy cheef squyer.
And this is he that loveth Emelye.
For sith the day is come that I schal dye,
I make pleynly my confessioun,
That I am the woful Palamoun,
That hath thi prisoun broke wikkedly.
I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
That loveth so hoote Emely the bright,
That I wol dye present in hire sight.
Therfore I aske deeth and my juwyse;
But slee my felaw in the same wyse,
For bothe we have served to be slayn.'

This worthy duk answerde anon agayn,
And seide: 'This is a schort conclusioun:
Your owne mouth, by your owne confessioun,
Hath dampned you bothe, and I wil it recorde.
It needeth nought to pyne yow with the corde.
Ye schul be deed by mighty Mars the reede!'
The queen anon for verray wommanhede
Gan for to wepe, and so dede Emelye,
And alle the ladies in *the* companye.
Great pité was it, as it thought hem alle,
That evere such a chaunce schulde falle;
For gentil men thei were and of gret estate,
And nothing but for love was this debate.
And saw here bloody woundes wyde and sore;
And alle they cryde lesse and the more,
'Have mercy, Lord, upon us wommen alle!'

And on here bare knees anoon they falle,
And wolde have kissed his bare feet right as he stood,
Til atte laste aslaked was his mood;
For pite renneth sone in gentil herte.
And though he *firste* for ire quok and sterte
He hath it al considered in a clause,
The trespas of hem bothe, and here cause:
And although his ire here gylt accuse*d*e,
Yet he, in his resoun, hem bothe excuse*d*e;
And thus he thought*e* that every maner man
Wol help himself in love if that he can,
And eek delyver himself out of prisoun.
And eek in his hert had*de* compassioun
Of wommen, for they wepen ever in oon;
And in his gentil hert he thought anoon,
And sothly he to himself seyde: 'Fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But be a lyoun bothe in word *and* dede,
To hem that ben in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a proud dispitious man,
That wol maynteyne that he first bigan.
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in such caas can no divisioun;
But wayeth pride and humblenesse after oon,
And schortly, whan his ire is over-gon,
He gan to loke on hem with eyen light,
And spak these same wordes al in hight.
'The god of love, a! *benedicite,*
How mighty and how gret a lord is he!
Agayns his might ther gayneth non obstacle,
He may be cleped a god of his miracle;
For he can maken at his owen gyse
Of every herte, as him luste devyse.

Lo her is Arcite and Palomon,
That quytely were out of my prisoun,
And might have lyved in Thebes ryally,
And witen I am here mortal enemy,
And that here deth lith in my might also,
And yet hath love, maugré here eyghen tuo,
I-brought hem hider bothe for to dye.
Now loketh, is nat that an heih folye?
Who may *not* be a fole, if that he love?
Byholde for Goddes *sake* that sitteth above,
Se how they blede! be they nought wel arrayed!
Thus hath here lord, the god of love, hem payed
Here wages and here fees for here servise.
And yet wenen they to ben *ful* wise,
That serven love, for ought that may bifalle.
But this is yette the beste game of alle,
That sche, for whom they have this jelousye,
Can hem therfore as moche thank as *jolite*.
Sche woot no more of al this hoote fare,
By God, than wot a cuckow or an hare.
But al moot ben assayed hoot or colde;
A man moot ben a fool other yong or olde;
I woot it by myself ful yore agon:
For in my tyme a servant was I on.
And sythen that I knewe of loves peyne,
And wot how sore it can a man destreyne,
As he that hath often ben caught in his lace,
I you foryeve holly this trespace,
At the request of the queen that kneleth heere,
And eek of Emely, my suster deere.
And ye schullen bothe anon unto me swere,
That never ye schullen my corowne dere,
Ne make werre on me night ne day,

But be my freendes *in* alle that ye may.
I you foryeve this trespas every dele.'
And they him swore his axyng *faire and wele*,
And him of lordschip and of mercy prayde,
And he hem graunted mercy, and thus he sayde:
'To speke of real lynage and riches
Though that sche were a queen or a prynces,
Ilk of yow bothe is worthy douteles
To wedde when tyme is, but natheles
I speke as for my suster Emelye,
For whom ye have this stryf and jelousye,
Ye woot youreself sche may not wedde two
At oones, though ye faughten ever mo:
That oon of yow, or be him loth or leef,
He may go pypen in an ivy leef;
This is to say, sche may nought have bothe,
Al be ye never so jelous, ne so lothe.
For-thy I put you bothe in this degré,
That ilk of you schal have his destyné,
As him is schape, and herken in what wyse;
Lo here your ende of that I schal devyse.
My wil is this, for playn conclusioun,
Withouten eny repplicacioun,
If that you liketh, tak it for the beste,
That every of you schal go wher him leste
Frely withouten raunsoun or daungeer;
And this day fyfty wykes, fer ne neer,
Everich of you schal bryng an hundred knightes,
Armed for lystes up at alle rightes
Al redy to derayne hir by batayle.
And thus byhote I you withouten fayle
Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knight,
That whethir of yow bothe that hath might,

This is to seyn, that whethir he or thou
May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
Sle his contrary, or out of lystes dryve,
Him schal I yeve Emelye to wyve,
To whom that fortune yeveth so fair a grace.
The lyste schal I make in this place,
And God so wisly on my sowle rewe,
As I schal even juge ben and trewe.
Ye schul non othir ende with me make,
That oon of yow schal be deed or take.
And if you thinketh this is wel i-sayde,
Say youre avys, and holdeth yow apayde.
This is youre ende and youre conclusioun.'
Who loketh lightly now but Palomoun?
Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
Who couthe telle, or who couthe endite,
The joye that is made in this place
Whan Theseus hath don so fair a grace?
But down on knees wente every wight,
And thanked him with al here hertes miht,
And namely the Thebanes ofte sithe.
And thus with good hope and herte blithe
They taken here leve, and hom-ward they ryde
To Thebes-*ward*, with olde walles wyde.
I trow men wolde it deme necligence,
If I foryete to telle the dispence
Of Theseus, that goth so busily
To maken up the lystes rially.
And such a noble theatre as it was,
I dar wel say that in this world ther nas.
The circuite ther was a myle aboute,
Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
Round was the schap, in maner of compaas,

Ful of degré, the height of sixty paas,
That whan a man was set in o degré
He lettede nought his felaw for to se.
Est-ward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
West-ward such another in opposit.
And schortly to conclude, such a place
Was non in erthe in so litel space.
In al the lond ther nas no craftys man,
That geometry or arsmetrike can,
Ne portreyour, ne kerver of ymages,
That Theseus ne yaf hem mete and wages
The theatre for to maken and devyse.
And for to don his right and sacrifise,
He est-ward hath upon the gate above,
In worschip of Venus, goddes of love,
Don make an auter and an oratory;
And westward in the mynde and in memory
Of Mars, he hath i-maked such another,
That coste largely of gold a fother.
And northward, in a toret on the walle,
Of alabaster whit and reed coralle
An oratory riche for to see,
In worschip of Dyane, goddes of chastité,
Hath Theseus i-wrought in noble wise.
But yit had I forgeten to devyse
The nobil kervyng, and the purtretures,
The schap, the contynaunce of the figures,
That weren in these oratories thre.
Furst in the temple of Venus thou may se
Wrought in the wal, ful pitous to byholde,
The broken slepes, and the sykes colde;
The sacred teeres, and the waymentyng;
The fuyry strokes of the desiryng,

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That loves servauntz in this lyf enduren;
The othes that by her covenantz assuren.
Plesance and hope, desyr, fool-hardynesse,
Beaute and youthe, baudery and richesse,
Charmes and sorcery, lesynges and flatery,
Dispense, busynes, and jelousy,
That werud of yolo guldes a gerland,
And a cukkow sittyng on hire hand;
Festes, instrumentz, carols, and daunces,
Lust and array, and al the circumstaunces
Of love, which I rekned and reken schal,
Ech by other were peynted on the wal.
And mo than I can make of mencioun.
For sothly al the mount of Setheroun,
Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellyng.
Was schewed on the wal here portrayng
With alle the gardyn, and al the lustynes.
Nought was foryete; the porter Ydelnes,
Ne Narcisus the fayr of yore agon,
Ne yet the foly of kyng Salomon,
Ne eek the grete strengthe of him Hercules,
Thenchauntementz of Medea and Cerces,
Ne of Turnus the hard fuyry corage,
The riche Cresus caytif in servage.
Thus may we see, that wisdom and riches,
Beauté ne sleight, strengthe ne hardynes,
Ne may with Venus holde champartye,
For as sche luste the world than may sche gye.
Lo, al this folk i-caught were in hire trace,
Til they for wo ful often sayde allas.
Sufficeth this ensample oon or tuo,
And though I couthe reken a thousend mo.
The statu of Venus, glorious for to see,

Was naked fletyng in the large see,
And fro the navel doun al covered was
With wawes grene, *and* bright as eny glas.
A citole in hire right hand hadde sche,
And on hir heed, ful semely on to see,
A rose garland ful swete and wel smellyng,
And aboven hire heed dowves *flikeryng*.
Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupido,
Upon his schuldres were wynges two;
And blynd he was, as it is often seene;
A bowe he bar and arwes fair and *kene*.
Why schuld I nought as wel telle you alle
The portraiture, that was upon the walle
Within the temple of mighty Mars the reede?
Al peynted was the wal in length and breede
Like to the estres of the grisly place,
That hight the gret tempul of Mars in Trace,
In that colde and frosty regioun,
Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mancioun.
First on the wal was peynted a foreste,
In which ther dwellede neyther man ne beste,
With knotty knarry bareyn trees olde
Of stubbes scharpe and hidous to byholde;
In which ther ran a swymbul in a swough,
As it were a storme schulde berst every bough:
And downward on an hil under a bent,
Ther stood the tempul of Marz armypotent,
Wrought al of burned steel, of which thentre
Was long and streyt, and gastly for to see.
And therout came a rage of suche a prise,
That it maad al the gates for to rise.
The northen light in at the dore schon,
For wyndow on the walle *ne* was ther noon,

Thorugh the which men might no light discerne.
The dores wer alle ademauntz eterne,
I-clenched overthward and endelong
With iren tough; and, for to make it strong,
Every piler the tempul to susteene
Was tonne greet, of iren bright and schene.
Ther saugh I furst the derk ymaginyng
Of felony, and al the compassyng;
The cruel ire, as reed as eny gleede;
The pikepurs, and eek the pale drede;
The smyler with the knyf under his cloke;
The schipne brennyng with the blake smoke;
The tresoun of the murtheryng in the bed;
The open werres, with woundes al bi-bled;
Contek with bloody knyf, and scharp manace.
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.
The sleer of himself yet saugh I there,
His herte-blood hath bathed al his here;
The nayl y-dryve in the schode a-nyght;
The colde deth, with mouth gapyng upright.
Amyddes of the tempul set meschaunce,
With sory comfort and evel contynaunce.
Yet I saugh *woodnes* laughyng in *his* rage:
The hunte strangled with wilde bores corage.
The caraigne in the busche, with throte i-korve:
A thousand slayne, and not of qualme i-storve;
The tiraunt, with the pray bi force i-rafte;
The toune distroied, there was no thing lafte.
Yet saugh I brent the schippis hoppesteres;
The hunte strangled with the wilde beeres:
The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;
The cook i-skalded, for al his longe ladel.
Nought beth forgeten the infortune of Mart;

The carter over-ryden with his cart,
Under the whel ful lowe he lay adoun.
Ther wer also of Martz divisioun,
The barbour, and the bowcher, and the smyth
That forgeth scharpe swerdes on his stith.
And al above depeynted in a tour
Saw I conquest sittyng in gret honour,
With the scharpe swerd over his heed
Hangynge by a sotil twyne threed.
Depeynted was ther the slaught of Julius,
Of grete Nero, and of Anthonius;
Al be that ilke tyme they were unborn,
Yet was here deth depeynted ther byforn,
By manasyng of Martz, right by figure,
So was it schewed right in the purtreture
As is depeynted in *the* sterres above,
Who schal be slayn or elles deed for love.
Sufficeth oon ensample in stories olde,
I may not rekene hem alle, though I wolde.
The statue of Mars upon a carte stood,
Armed, and lokede grym as he were wood;
And over his heed ther schyneth two figures
Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures,
That oon Puella, that othur Rubius.
This god of armes was arayed thus.
A wolf ther stood byforn him at his feet
With eyen reed, and of a man he eet;
With sotyl pencel depeynted was this storie,
In redoutyng of Mars and of his glorie.
Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
As schortly as I can I wol me haste,
To telle you al the descripcioun.
Depeynted ben the walles up and doun,

Of huntyng and of schamefast chastite.
Ther saugh I how woful Calystopé,
Whan that Dyane was agreved with here,
Was turned from a womman to a bere,
And after was sche maad the loode-sterre;
Thus was it peynted, I can say no ferre;
Hire son is eek *a sterre*, as men may see.
Ther sawgh I Dyane turned intil a tree,
I mene nought the goddes Dyane,
But Peneus doughter, the whiche hight Dane.
Ther saugh I Atheon an hert i-maked,
For vengance that he saugh Dyane al naked;
I saugh how that his houndes han him caught
And freten him, for that they knew him naught.
Yit i-peynted was a litel forthermore.
How Atthalaunce huntyde the wilde bore,
And Melyagre, and many another mo,
For which Dyane wrought hem care and woo.
Ther saugh I eek many another story,
The which me liste not drawe in to memory.
This goddess on an hert ful hy she seet,
With smale houndes *al aboute* hire feet,
And undernethe hir feet sche had the moone,
Wexyng it was, and schulde wane soone.
In gaude greene hire statue clothed was,
With bowe in hande, and arwes in a cas.
Hir eyghen caste sche ful lowe adoun,
Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
A womman travailyng was hire biforn,
But for hire child so longe was unborn
Ful pitously Lucyna gan she calle,
And seyde, 'Help, for thou mayst best of alle.'
Wel couthe he peynte lyfly that it wrought,

With many a floren he the newes bought.
Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus
That at his grete cost arayede thus
The temples and the theatres every del,
Whan it was don, it liked him right wel.
But stynt I wil of Theseus a lite,
And speke of Palomon and of Arcite.
The day approcheth of her attournynge,
That every schuld an hundred knightes brynge,
The batail to derreyne, as I you tolde;
And til Athenes, her covenant to holde,
Hath every of hem brought an hundred knightes
Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
And sikerly ther trowede many a man
That never, siththen that this world bigan,
For to speke of knighthod of her hond,
As fer as God hath maked see or lond,
Nas, of so fewe, so good a company.
For every wight that loveth chyvalry,
And wold, his thankes, have a passant name,
Hath preyed that he mighte be of that game;
And wel was him, that therto chosen was.
For if ther felle to morwe such a caas,
I knowe wel, that every lusty knight
That loveth paramours, and hath his might,
Were it in Engelond, or elleswhere,
They wold, here thankes, wilne to be there.
To fighte for a lady; *benedicite!*
It were a lusty sighte for to see.
And right so ferden they with Palomon.
With him ther wente knyghtes many oon;
Some wol ben armed in an haburgoun,
In a bright brest-plat and a gypoun;

And som wold have a peyre plates large;
And som wold have a *Pruce* scheld, or a targe;
Som wol been armed on here legges weel,
And have an ax, and eek a mace of steel.
Ther nys no newe gyse, that it nas old.
Armed were they, as I have *you* told,
Everich after his owen opinioun.
Ther maistow se comyng with Palomoun
Ligurge himself, the grete kyng of Trace;
Blak was his berd, and manly was his face.
The cercles of his eyen in his heed
They gloweden bytwixe yolw and reed,
And lik a griffoun loked he aboute,
With kempe heres on his browes stowte;
His lymes greet, his brawnes hard and stronge,
His schuldres brood, his armes rounde and longe.
And as the gyse was in his contré,
Ful heye upon a chare of gold stood he,
With foure white boles in a trays.
In stede of cote armour in his harnays,
With nales yolwe, and bright as eny gold,
He had a bere skyn, cole-blak for old.
His lange heer y-kempt byhynd his bak,
As eny raven fether it schon for blak.
A wrethe of gold arm-gret, and huge of wighte,
Upon his heed, set ful of stoones brighte,
Of fyne rubeus and of fyn dyamauntz.
Aboute his chare wente white alauntz,
Twenty and mo, as grete as eny stere,
To hunt at the lyoun or at the bere,
And folwed him, with mosel fast i-bounde,
Colerd with golde, and torettz fyled rounde.
An hundred lordes had he in his route

Armed ful wel, with hertes stern and stoute.
With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,
The gret Emetreus, the kyng of Ynde,
Uppon a steede bay, trapped in steel,
Covered with cloth of gold dyapred wel,
Cam rydyng lyk the god of armes Mars.
His coote armour was of a cloth of Tars,
Cowched of perlys whyte, round and grete.
His sadil was of brend gold newe *i*-bete;
A mantelet upon his schuldre hangyng
Bret-ful of rubies reed, as fir sparclyng.
His crispe her lik rynges was i-ronne,
And that was yalwe, and gliteryng as the sonne.
His nose was heigh, his eyen *bright* cytryne,
His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn,
A fewe freknes in his face y-spreynd,
Betwixe yolwe and somdel blak y-meynd,
And as a lyoun he his lokyng caste.
Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.
His berd was wel bygonne for to sprynge;
His voys was as a trumpe thunderynge.
Upon his heed he wered *of* laurer grene
A garlond freisch and lusty for to sene.
Upon his hond he bar for his delyt
An egle tame, as eny lylie whyt.
An hundred lordes had he with him ther,
Al armed sauf here hedes in here ger,
Ful richely in alle maner thinges.
For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
Were gadred in this noble companye,
For love, and for encres of chivalrye.
Aboute the kyng ther ran on every part
Ful many a tame lyoun and lepart.

And in this wise this lordes alle and some
Been on the Sonday to the cité come
Aboute prime, and in the toun alight.
This Theseus, this duk, this worthy knight,
Whan he hadde brought hem into this cité,
And ynned hem, everich at his degré
He festeth hem, and doth so gret labour
To esen hem, and do hem al honour,
That yit men wene that no mannes wyt
Of non estat that cowde amenden it.
The mynstraleye, the servyce at the feste,
The grete yiftes to the most and leste,
The riche aray of *Theseus* paleys,
Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
What ladies fayrest ben or best daunsynge,
Or which of hem can daunce best or synge,
Ne who most felyngly speketh of love;
What haukes sitten on the perche above,
What houndes lyen in the floor adoun:
Of al this make I now no mencioun;
But of theffect; that thinketh me the beste;
Now comth the poynt, and herkneth if you leste.

The Sonday night, or day bigan to springe,
When Palomon the larke herde synge,
Although it were nought day by houres tuo,
Yit sang the larke, and Palomon also
With holy herte, and with an heih corage
He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage
Unto the blisful Cithera benigne,
I mene Venus, honorable and digne.
And in hire hour he walketh forth a paas
Unto the lystes, ther hir temple was,
And doun he kneleth, and, with humble cheer

And herte sore, *he* seide as ye schal heer.
'Fairest *of faire*, o lady myn Venus,
Doughter of Jove, and spouse to Vulcanus,
Thou glader of the mount of Citheroun,
For thilke love thou haddest to Adeoun
Have pité on my bitter teeres smerte,
And tak myn humble prayer to thin herte.
Allas! I ne have no langage for to telle
Theffectes ne the tormentz of myn helle;
Myn herte may myn harmes nat bewreye;
I am so confuse, that I may not seye.
But mercy, lady bright, that knowest wel
My thought, and felest what harm that I fel,
Consider al this, and rew upon my sore,
As wisly as I schal for evermore
Enforce my might thi trewe servant to be,
And holde werre alday with chastité;
That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
I kepe nat of armes for to yelpe,
Ne nat I aske to morn to have victorie,
Ne renoun in this caas, ne veyne glorie
Of pris of armes, blowyng up and doun,
But I wolde have ful possessioun
Of Emelye, and dye in thi servise;
Fynd thou the maner how, and in what wyse.
I recche nat, but it may better be,
To have victorie of him, or he of me,
So that I have my lady in myn armes.
For though so be that Mars be god of armes,
And ye be Venus, the goddes of love,
Youre vertu is so gret in heven above,
Thy temple wol I worschipe evermo,
And on thin auter, wher I ryde or go,

I wol do sacrifice, and fyres beete.
And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
Than pray I the, to morwe with a spere
That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
Thanne rekke I nat, whan I have lost my lyf,
Though that Arcite have hir to his wyf.
This is theffect and ende of my prayeere;
Yif me my love, *thou* blisful lady deere.'
Whan thorisoun was doon of Palomon,
His sacrifice he dede, and that anoon
Ful pitously, with alle circumstances,
Al telle I nat as now his observances.
But at the last the statu of Venus schook,
And made a signe, wherby that he took
That his prayer accepted was that day.
For though the signe schewed a delay,
Yet wist he wel that graunted was his boone;
And with glad herte he went him hom ful soone.

The thrid hour inequal that Palomon
Bigan to Venus temple for to goon,
Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,
And to the temple of Dian gan sche hye.
Hir maydens, that sche with hir thider ladde,
Ful redily with hem the fyr they hadde,
Thencens, the clothes, and the *re*menant al
That to the sacrifice longen schal;
The hornes ful of meth, as is the gyse;
Ther lakketh nought to do here sacrifise.
Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire,
This Emelye with herte debonaire
Hir body wessch with watir of a welle;
But how sche dide I ne dar nat telle,
But it be eny thing in general;

And yet it were a game to here it al;
To him that meneth wel it were no charge:
But it is good a man be at his large.
Hir brighte her was kempt, untressed al;
A corone of a grene ok cerial
Upon hir heed was set ful fair and meete.
Tuo fyres on the auter gan sche beete,
And did hir thinges, as men may biholde
In Stace of Thebes and the bokes olde.
Whan kynled was the fyre, with pitous cheere
Unto Dyan sche spak, as ye may heere.

'O chaste goddes of the woodes greene,
To whom bothe heven and erthe and see is scene
Queen of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
Goddes of maydenes, that myn hert has knowe
Ful many a yeer, ye woot what I desire,
As keep me fro the vengans of thilk yre,
That Atheon aboughte trewely:
Chaste goddesse, wel wost thou that I
Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
Ne never wol I be no love ne wyf.
I am yit, thou wost, of thi company,
A mayden, and love huntyng and venery,
And for to walken in the woodes wylde,
And nought to ben a wyf, and be with chylde.
Nought wol I knowe the company of man.
Now helpe me, lady, sythnes ye may and kan,
For the *thre* formes that thou hast in the.
And Palomon, that hath such love to me,
And eek Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
This grace I praye the withouten more,
And sende love and pees betwix hem two;
And fro me torne awey here hertes so,

That al here hoote love, and here desire,
Al here besy torment, and al here fyre
Be queynt, or turned in another place.
And if so be thou wolt do me no grace,
Or if my destyné be schapid so,
That I schal needes have on of hem two,
So send me him that most desireth me.
Biholde, goddes of clene chastité,
The bitter teeres that on my cheekes falle.
Syn thou art mayde, and keper of us alle,
My maydenhode thou kepe and wel conserve,
And whil I lyve a mayde I wil the serve.'
The fyres brenne upon the auter cleer,
Whil Emelye was *thus* in hire preyer;
But sodeinly sche saugh a sighte queynte,
For right anon on of the fyres queynte,
And quyked agayn, and after that anon
That other fyr was queynt, and al agon;
And as it queynt, it made a whistelyng,
As doth a wete brond in his brennyng.
And at the brondes end out ran anoon
As it were bloody dropes many oon;
For which so sore agast was Emelye,
That sche wel neih mad was, and gan to crie,
For sche ne wiste what it signifyede;
But oonely for feere thus sche cryede,
And wepte, that it was pité to heere.
And therewithal Dyane gan appeere,
With bow in hond, right as a hunteresse,
And seyd; 'A! doughter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
And by eterne word write and confermed,
Thou schalt be wedded unto oon of tho.

That have for the so moche care and wo;
But unto which of hem may I nat telle.
Farwel, for I may her no lenger dwelle.
The fyres which that on myn auter brenne
Schuln the declare, or that thou go henne,
Thyn adventure of love, and in this caas.'
And with that word, the arwes in the caas
Of the goddesse clatren faste and rynge,
And forth sche went, and made a vanysschynge,
For which this Emelye astoneyd was,
And seide, 'What amounteth this, allas!
I put me under thy protecciouN,
Dyane, and in thi disposicioun.'
And hoom sche goth anon the nexte waye.
This is theffect, ther nys no mor to saye.
The nexte houre of Mars folwynge this,
Arcite *unto* the temple walkyd is,
To fyry Mars to doon his sacrifise,
With al the rightes of his payen wise.
With pitous herte and heih devocioun,
Right thus to Mars he sayd his orisoun:
'O stronge god, that in the reynes colde
Of Trace honoured and lord art thou y-holde,
And hast in every regne and every land
Of armes al the bridel in thy hand,
And hem fortunest as the luste devyse,
Accept of me my pitous sacrifise.
If so be that my youthe may deserve,
And that my might be worthi *for* to serve
Thy godhed, that I may be on of thine,
Then pray I the to rewe on my pyne,
For thilke peyne, and that hoote fuyre,
In which whilom thou brendest for desyre.

Whan that thou usedest the gret bewté
Of faire freissche Venus, that is so free,
And haddest hir in armes at thy wille;
And though the ones on a tyme mysfille.
When Vulcanus had*de* caught the in his laas,
And fand the liggyng by his wyf, allaas!
For thilke sorwe that was in thin herte.
Have reuthe as wel upon my peynes smerte.
I am yong and unkonnyng, as thou wost,
And, as I trowe, with love offendid most,
That ever was eny lyves creature;
For sche, that doth me al this wo endure,
Ne rekketh never whether I synke or flete.
And wel I woot, or sche me mercy heete,
I moot with strengthe wyn hir in the place;
And wel I wot, withouten help or grace
Of the, ne may my strengthe nought avayle.
Then help me, lord, to morn in my batayle,
For thilke fyr that whilom brende the,
As wel as this fire now brenneth me;
And do to morn that I have the victorie.
Myn be the travail, al thin be the glorie.
Thy soverein tempul wol I most honouren
Of any place, and alway most labouren
In thy plesaunce and in thy craftes stronge.
And in thy tempul I wol my baner honge,
And alle the armes of my companye,
And ever more, unto that day I dye,
Eterne fyr I wol bifore the fynde.
And eek to this avow I wol me bynde:
My berd, myn heer that hangeth longe adoun,
That never yit ne felt offensioun
Of rasour ne of schere, I wol thee yive,

And be thy trewe servaunt whiles I lyve.
Lord, have rowthe uppon my sorwes sore,
Yif me the victorie, I aske no more.'
The preyer stynt of Arcita the strange,
The rynges on the tempul dore that hange,
And eek the dores, clatereden ful fast,
Of which Arcita somwhat was agast.
The fires brenden on the auter brighte,
That it gan al the tempul for to lighte;
A swote smel anon the ground upyaf,
And Arcita anon his hand up haf,
And more encens into the fyr yet caste,
With othir rightes, and than atte laste
The statu of Mars bigan his hauberk rynge,
And with that soun he herd a murmurynge
Ful lowe and dym, and sayde thus, 'Victorie.'
For which he yaf to Mars honour and glorie.
And thus with joye, and hope wel to fare,
Arcite anoon unto his inne is fare,
As fayn as foul is of the brighte sonne.
And right anon such stryf is bygonne
For that grauntyng, in the heven above,
Bitwixe Venus the goddes of love,
And Marcz the sterne god armypotente,
That Jupiter was busy it to stente;
Til that the pale Saturnes the colde,
That knew so many of aventures olde,
Fond in his *olde* experiens an art,
That he ful sone hath plesyd every part.
As soth is sayd, eelde hath gret avantage,
In eelde is bothe wisdom and usage;
Men may the eelde at-renne, but nat at-rede.
Saturne anon, to stynte stryf and drede,

Al be it that it be agayns his kynde,
Of al this stryf he can remedy fynde.
'My deere doughter Venus,' quod Satourne,
'My cours, that hath so wyde for to tourne,
Hath more power than woot eny man.
Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan;
Myn is the prisoun in the derke cote;
Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte;
The murmur, and the cherles rebellyng;
The groynyng, and the pryvé enpoysonyng,
I do vengance and pleyn correctioun,
Whiles I dwelle in the signe of the lyoun.
Myn is the ruen of the hihe halles,
The fallyng of the toures and the walles
Upon the mynour or the carpenter.
I slowh Sampsoun in schakyng the piler.
And myne ben the maladies colde,
The derke tresoun, and the castes olde;
Myn lokyng is the fadir of pestilens.
Now wepe nomore, I schal do my diligence,
That Palomon, that is myn owen knight,
Schal have his lady, as thou him bihight.
Thow Marez schal kepe his knight, yet nevertheles
Bitwixe you ther moot som tyme be pees;
Al be ye nought of oo complexioun,
That ilke day causeth such divisioun.
I am thi ayel, redy at thy wille;
Wepe thou nomore, I wol thi lust fulfille.'
Now wol I stynt of the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venus goddes of love,
And telle you, as pleinly as I can,
The grete effecte for *which* that I bigan.
Gret was the fest in Athenus that day,

And eek that lusty sesoun of that May
Made every wight to ben in such plesaunce,
That al the Monday jousten they and daunce,
And spende hit in Venus heigh servise.
But by the cause that they schuln arise
Erly a-morwe for to see that fight,
Unto their rest wente they at nyght.
And on the morwe whan the day gan sprynge,
Of hors and hernoys noyse and claterynge
Ther was in the oostes al aboute;
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes, upon steede and on palfreys.
Ther mayst thou see devysyng of herneys
So uncowth and so riche wrought and wel
Of goldsmithry, of browdyng, and of steel;
The scheldes bright, testers, and trappures;
Gold-beten helmes, hauberks, and cote armures;
Lordes in paramentz on her coursers,
Knightes of retenu, and eek squyers
Rayhyng the speres, and helmes bokelyng,
Girdyng of scheeldes, with layneres lasyng;
Ther as need is, they were nothing ydel;
Ther fomen steedes, on the golden bridel
Gnawyng, and faste armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
Yemen on foote, and knaves many oon
With schorte staves, as thikke as they may goon;
Pypes, trompes, nakers, and clariounes,
That in the batail blewe bloody sownes;
The paleys ful of pepul up and doun,
Heer thre, ther ten, haldyng her questioun,
Dyvynyng of this Thebans knightes two.
Som seyden thus, som seyd it schal be so;

Som heelde with him with the blake berd,
Som with the ballyd, som with *the* thikke hered;
Som sayd he lokede grym *and* wolde fighte;
He hath a sparth of twenti pound of wighte.
Thus was the halle ful of devynynge,
Lang after that the sonne gan to springe.
The gret Theseus that of his sleep is awaked
With menstralcy and noyse that was maked,
Held yit the chambre of his paleys riche,
Til that the Thebanes knyghtes bothe i-liche
Honoured weren, and into paleys fet.
Duk Theseus was at a wyndow set,
Arayed right as he were god in trone.
The pepul preseth thider-*ward* ful sone
Him for to seen, and doon him reverence,
And eek herken his hest and his sentence.
An herowd on a skaffold made a hoo,
Til al the noyse of the pepul was i-doo;
And whan he sawh the pepul of noyse al stille,
Thus schewed he the mighty dukes wille.

'The lord hath of his heih discrecioun
Considered, that it were destruccioun
To gentil blood, to fighten in this wise
Of mortal batail now in this emprise;
Wherfor to schapen that they schulde not dye,
He wol his firste purpos modifye.
No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
No maner schot, ne pollax, ne schort knyf
Into the lystes sende, or thider brynge;
Ne schorte swerd for to stoke the *pointe* bytynge
No man ne drawe, ne bere by his side.
Ne noman schal unto his felawe ryde
But oon cours, with a scharpe *ygrounde* spere;

Foyne if him lust on foote, himself to were.
And he that is at meschief, schal be take,
And nat slayn, but be brought to the stake,
That schal be ordeyned on eyther syde;
But thider he schal by force, and ther abyde.
And if so falle, a cheventen be take
On eyther side, or elles sle his make,
No lenger schal the turneynge laste.
God spede you; goth forth and ley on faste.
With long swerd and with mace fight your fille.
Goth now your way; this is the lordes wille.'

The voice of the poepul touchith heven,
So lowde criede thei with *mery* steven:
'God save such a lord that is so good,
He wilneth no destruccioun of blood!'
Up goth the trompes and the melodye.
And to the lystes ryde the companye
By ordynaunce, thurgh the cité large,
Hangyng with cloth of gold, and not with sarge.
Ful lik a lord this nobul duk can ryde,
These tuo Thebanes on eyther side;
And after rood the queen, and Emelye,
And after hem of ladyes another companye,
And after hem of comunes after here degre.
And thus they passeden thurgh that cité,
And to the lystes come thei by tyme.
It nas not of the day yet fully pryme,
Whan sette was Theseus riche and hye,
Ypolita the queen and Emelye,
And other ladyes in here degrees aboute.
Unto the seetes preseth al the route;
And west-ward, thorugh the yates of Mart,
Arcite, and eek the hundred of his part,

With baners *rede* ys entred right anoon ;
And *in* that selve moment Palomon
Is, under Venus, est-ward in that place,
With baner whyt, and hardy cheer *and* face
In al the world, to seeke up and doun,
So even without variacioun
Ther nere suche companyes tweye.
For ther nas noon so wys that cowthe seye,
That any had of other avauntage
Of worthines, ne staat, ne of visage,
So evene were they chosen for to gesse.
And in two renges faire they hem dresse.
And whan here names i-rad were everychon,
That in here nombre gile were ther noon.
Tho were the gates schitt, and cried lowde :
'Doth now your devoir, yonge knightes proude!'
The heraldz laften here prikyng up and doun ;
Now ryngede the tromp and clarioun ;
Ther is nomore to say, but est and west
In goth the speres *ful sadly* in arest ;
Ther seen men who can juste, and who can ryde ;
In goth the scharpe spore into the side.
Ther schyveren schaftes upon schuldres thykke ;
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spon the prikke.
Up sprengen speres on twenty foot on hight ;
Out goon the swerdes as the silver bright.
The helmes thei to-hewen and to-schrede ;
Out brast the blood, with stoute stremes reede,
With mighty maces the bones thay to-breste.
He thurgh the thikkest of the throng gan threste.
Ther stomblen steedes strong, and doun can falle.
He *rolleth* under foot as doth a balle.
He feyneth on his foot with a tronchoun,

And him hurteleth with his hors adoun.
He thurgh the body hurt is, and siththen take
Maugré his heed, and brought unto the stake,
As forward was, right ther he most abyde.
Another lad is on that other syde.
And som tyme doth Theseus hem to reste,
Hem to refreissche, and drinke if hem leste.
Ful ofte a-day have this Thebans twoo
Togider y-met, and wrought his felaw woo;
Unhorsed hath ech other of hem tweye.
Ther nas no tygyr in the vale of Galgopleye,
Whan that hir whelp is stole, whan it is litle,
So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite
For jelous hert upon this Palomon:
Ne in Belmary ther is no fel lyoun,
That hunted is, or is for hunger wood,
Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
As Palomon to sle his foo Arcite.
This jelous strokes on here helmes byte;
Out renneth blood on bothe here sides reede.
Som tyme an ende ther is on every dede;
For er the sonne unto the reste wente,
The strange kyng Emetreus gan hente
This Palomon, as he faught with Arcite,
And his swerd in his fleissch *depe* did byte;
And by the force of twenti he is take
Unyolden, and i-drawe unto the stake.
And in the rescous of this Palomon
The stronge kyng Ligurgius is born adoun;
And kyng Emetreus for al his strengthe
Is born out of his sadel his swerdes lengthe,
So hit him Palamon er he were take;
But al for nought, he was brought to the stake

His hardy herte might him helpe nought;
He most abyde whan that he was caught,
By force, and eek by composicioun.
Who sorweth now but *woful* Palomoun,
That moot nomore gon agayn to fighte?
And whan that Theseus hadde seen that sighte,
He cryed, 'Hoo! nomore, for it is doon!
Ne noon schal lenger unto his felaw goon.
I wol be trewe juge, and nought partye.
Arcyte of Thebes schal have Emelye,
That hath by his fortune hire i-wonne.'
Anoon ther is *a* noyse *of peple* bygonne
For joye of this, so lowde and heye withalle,
It semede that the listes wolde falle.
What can now fayre Venus doon above?
What seith sche now? what doth this queen of love?
But wepeth so, for wantyng of hir wille,
Til that hire teeres in the lystes fille;
Sche seyde: 'I am aschamed douteles.'
Satournus seyde: 'Doughter, hold thy pees.
Mars hath his wille, his knight hath his boone,
And by myn heed thou schalt be esed soone.'
The trompes with the lowde mynstralcy,
The herawdes, that ful lowde yolle and cry,
Been in here joye for daun Arcyte.
But herkneth me, and stynteth but a lite,
Which a miracle *ther* bifel anoon.
This Arcyte fersly hath don his helm adoun,
And on his courser for to schewe his face,
He priked endlange in the large place,
Lokyng upward upon his Emelye;
And sche agayn him cast a frendly yghe,
For wommen, as for to speke in comune,

Thay folwe alle the favour of fortune)
And was alle his in cheer, and in his herte.
Out of the ground a fyr infernal sterte,
From Pluto send, at the request of Saturne,
For which his hors for feere gan to turne.
And leep asyde, and foundred as he leep;
And or that Arcyte may take keep,
He pight him on the pomel of his heed,
That in that place he lay as he were deed,
His brest to-broken with his sadil bowe.
As blak he lay as eny col or crowe,
So was the blood y-ronne in his face.
Anon he was y-born out of the place
With herte sore, to Theseus paleys.
Tho was he corven out of his harneys,
And in a bed y-brought ful fair and blyve,
For yit he was in memory and on lyve,
And alway cryeng after Emelye.
Duk Theseus, and al his companye,
Is comen hom to Athenes his cité,
With alle blys and gret solempnité.
Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde nought discomforten hem alle.
Men seyde eek, that Arcita schulde nought dye,
He schal be helyd of his maladye.
And of another thing they were as fayn,
That of hem alle ther was noon y-slayn,
Al were they sore hurt, and namely oon,
That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
To other woundes, and to-broken armes,
Some hadde salve, and some hadde charmes,
Fermacyes of herbes, and eek save
They dronken, for they wolde here lyves have.

For which this noble duk, as he wel can,
Comforteth and honoureth every man,
And made revel al the lange night,
Unto the straunge lordes, as it was right.
Ne ther was holden to discomfytyng.
But as a justes or as a *turneying*;
For sothly ther was no discomfiture,
For fallynge is but an adventure.
Ne to be lad with fors unto the stake
Unyolden, and with twenty knightes take,
A person allone, withouten moo,
And *haried* forth by arme, foot, and too,
And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
With footemen, bothe yemen and *eke* knaves,
It was aretted him no vylonye,
Ne no maner man held it no cowardye.

For which Theseus lowd anon leet crie,
To stynten al rancour and al envye,
The gree as wel on o syde as on other,
And every side lik, as otheres brother;
And yaf hem yiftes after here degré,
And fully heeld a feste dayes thre;
And conveyede the knightes worthily
Out of his toun a journee largely.
And hom went every man the righte way.
Ther was no more, but 'Farwel, have good day!'
Of this batayl I wol no more endite,
But speke of Palomon and of Arcyte.

Swelleth the brest of Arcyte, and the sore
Encresceth at his herte more and more.
The clothred blood, for eny leche-craft,
Corrumpith, and is in his bouk i-laft,
That nother veyne blood, ne ventusyng,

Ne drynk of herbes may ben his helpyng.
The vertu expulsif, or animal,
For thilke vertu cleped natural,
Ne may the venym voyde, ne expelle.
The pypes of his lounges gan to swelle,
And every lacerte in his brest adoun
Is schent with venym and corrupcioun.
Him gayneth nother, for to get his lyf,
Vomyt up-ward, ne doun-ward laxatif;
Al is to-broken thilke regioun;
Nature hath now no dominacioun.
And certeynly wher nature wil not wirche,
Farwel phisik; go bere the man to chirche.
This al and som, that Arcyte moste dye.
For which he sendeth after Emelye,
And Palomon, that was his cosyn deere.
Than seyd he thus, as ye schul after heere.

'Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
Declare a poynt of my sorwes smerte
To you, my lady, that I love most;
But I byquethe the service of my gost
To you aboven every creature,
Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure.
Allas, the woo! allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for you have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deth! alas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departyng of our companye!
Allas, myn hertes queen! allas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, ender of my lyf!
What is this world? what asken men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone withouten eny companye.
Farwel, my swete! farwel, myn Emelye!

And softe take me in your armes tweye,
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.
I have heer with my cosyn Palomon
Had stryf and rancour many a day i-gon,
For love of yow, and eek for jelousie.
And Jupiter so wis my sowle gye,
To speken of a servaunt proprely,
With alle circumstaunces trewely,
That is to seyn, truthe, honour, and knighthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, astaat, and *hye* kynrede,
Fredam, and al that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne know I non
So worthy to be loved as Palomon,
That serveth you, and wol do al his lyf.
And if that ye schul ever be a wyf,
Foryet not Palomon, that gentil man.'
And with that word his speche faile gan;
For fro his herte up to his brest was come
The cold of deth, that him had*de* overcome.
And yet moreover in his armes twoo
The vital strength is lost, and al agoo.
Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte sik and sore,
Gan fayle, when the herte felte death.
Duskyng his eyghen two, and fayled*e* breth.
But on his lady yit he cast his ye;
His laste word was, ' Mercy, Emelye!'
His spiryt chaunged was, and wente ther,
As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher.
Therefore I stynte, I nam no dyvynistre;
Of soules fynde I not in this registre,
Ne me liste nat thopynyouns to telle

Of hem, though that thei wyten wher they dwelle.
Arcyte is cold, *lat* Mars his soule gye;
Now wol I speke forth of Emelye.
Shright Emely, and howlede Palomon,
And Theseus his sustir took anon
Swownyng, and bar hir fro the corps away.
What helpeth it to tarye forth the day,
To telle how sche weep bothe eve and morwe?
For in swich caas wommen can have such sorwe,
Whan that here housbonds ben from hem ago,
That for the more part they sorwen so,
Or elles fallen in such maladye,
That atte laste certeynly they dye.
Infynyt been the sorwes and the teeres
Of olde folk, *and folk* of tendre yeeres;
So gret a wepyng was ther noon certayn,
Whan Ector was i-brought, al freissh i-slayn,
As that ther was for deth of this Theban;
For sorwe of him ther weepeth bothe child and man
At Troye, allas! the pité that was there,
Cracchyng of cheekes, rending eek of here.
'Why woldist thou be deed,' this wommen crye,
'And haddest gold ynowgh, and Emelye?'
No man mighte glade Theseus,
Savyng his olde fader Egeus,
That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he hadde seen it torne up and doun,
Joye after woo, and woo aftir gladnesse:
And schewed him ensample and likenesse.
'Right as ther deyde never man,' quod he,
'That he ne lyved in erthe in som degree,
Yit ther ne lyvede never man,' he seyde,

'In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of woo,
And we ben pilgryms, passyng to and froo;
Deth is an ende of every worldly sore.'
And over al this yit seide he mochil more
To this effect, ful wysly to enhorte
The peple, that *they* schulde him recomforte.
Duk Theseus, with al his busy cure,
Cast busyly wher that the sepulture
Of good Arcyte may best y-maked be,
And eek most honurable in his degré.
And atte last he took conclusioun,
That ther as first Arcite and Palomon
Hadden for love the batail hem bytwene,
That in the selve grove, soote and greene,
Ther as he hadde his amorous desires,
His compleynt, and for love his hoote fyres,
He wolde make a fyr, in which thoffice
Funeral he might *hem* al accomplice;
And leet comaunde anon to hakke and hewe
The okes old, and lay hem on a rewe
In culpouns wel arrayed for to brenne.
His officers with swifte foot they renne,
And ryde anon at his comaundement.
And after this, Theseus hath i-sent
After a beer, and it al overspradde
With cloth of golde, the richest that he hadde.
And of the same sute he clad Arcyte;
Upon his hondes were his gloves white;
Eke on his heed a croune of laurer grene;
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.
He leyde him bare the visage on the beere,
Therwith he weep that pité was to heere.

And for the poeple schulde see him alle,
Whan it was day he brought hem to the halle,
That roreth of the cry and of the soun.
Tho cam this woful Theban Palomoun,
With flotery berd, and ruggy asshy heeres,
In clothis blak, y-dropped al with teeres,
And, passyng other, of wepyng Emelye,
The rewfullest of al the companye.
In as moche as the service schulde be
The more nobul and riche in his degré,
Duk Theseus leet forth thre steedes brynge,
That trapped were in steel al gliterynge,
And covered with armes of dan Arcyte.
Upon the steedes, that weren grete and white,
Ther seeten folk, of which oon bar his scheeld,
Another his spere up in his hondes heeld;
The thridde bar with him his bowe Turkeys,
Of brend gold was the caas and eek the herneys;
And riden forth a paas with sorwful chere
Toward the grove, as ye schul after heere.
The nobles of the Grekes that ther were
Upon here schuldres carieden the beere,
With slak paas, and eyhen reed and wete,
Thurghout the cité, by the maister streete,
That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
Right of the same is al the stret i-wrye.
Upon the right hond went olde Egeus,
And on that other syde duk Theseus,
With vessels in here hand of gold wel fyn,
As ful of hony, mylk, and blood, and wyn;
Eke Palomon, with a gret companye;
And after that com woful Emelye,
With fyr in hond, as was that time the gyse,

To do thoffice of funeral servise.
Heygh labour, and ful gret apparailyng
Was at the service and at the fyr makyng,
That with his grene top the heven raughte,
And twenty fadme of brede tharme straughte;
This is to seyn, the boowes were so brode.
Of stree first was ther leyd ful many a loode.
But how the fyr was makyd up on highte,
And eek the names how the trees highte,
As ook, fyr, birch, asp, aldir, holm, popler,
Wilw, elm, plane, assch, box, chesteyn, lynde, laurer,
Mapul, thorn, beech, hasil, ew, wyppyltre,
How they weren felde, schal nought be told for me;
Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun,
Disheryt of here habitacioun,
In which they whilom woned in rest and pees,
Nymphes, Faunes, and Amadryes;
Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle
Fledden for feere, whan the woode was falle;
Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
That was nought wont to see no sonne bright;
Ne how the fyr was couchid first with stree,
And thanne with drye stykkes cloven in three,
And thanne with grene woode and spicerie,
And thanne with cloth of gold and with perrye,
And gerlandes hangyng with ful many a flour,
The myrre, thensens with also *swet* odour;
Ne how Arcyte lay among al this,
Ne what richesse aboute his body is;
Ne how that Emely, as was the gyse,
Putt in the fyr of funeral servise;
Ne how she swowned*e* when sche made the fyre,
Ne what sche spak, ne what was hire desire;

Ne what jewels men in the fyr tho caste,
Whan that the fyr was gret and brente faste;
Ne how sum caste hir scheeld, and summe her spere,
And of here vestimentz, which that they were,
And cuppes ful of wyn, and mylk, and blood,
Unto the fyr, that brent as it were wood;
Ne how the *Grekes* with an huge route
Thre tymes ryden al the fyr aboute
Upon the lefte hond, with an heih schoutyng,
And thries with here speres clateryng;
And thries how the ladyes gan to crye;
Ne how that lad was home-ward Emelye;
Ne how Arcyte is brent to aschen colde;
Ne howe that liche-wake was y-holde
Al thilke night, ne how the Grekes pleye
The wake-pleyes, kepe I nat to seye;
Who wrastleth best naked, with oyle enoynt,
Ne who that bar him best in no disjoynt.
I wol not telle eek how that they ben goon
Hom til Athenes whan the pley is doon.
But schortly to the poynt now wol I wende,
And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By proces and by lengthe of certeyn yeres
Al styntyd is the mornyng and the teeres
Of alle Grekys, by oon general assent.
Than semede me ther was a parlement
At Athenes, on a certeyn poynt and cas;
Among the whiche poyntes spoken was
To han with certeyn contrees alliaunce,
And have fully of Thebans obeissance.
For which this noble Theseus anon
Let senden after gentil Palomon,
Unwist of him what was the cause and why;

But in his blake clothes sorwfully
He cam at his comaundement in hye.
Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.
Whan they were sette, and hussht was al the place,
And Theseus abyden hadde a space
Or eny word cam fro his wyse brest,
His eyen set he ther as was his lest.
And with a sad visage he sykede stille,
And after that right thus he seide his wille.
'The firste moevere of the cause above,
Whan he first made the fayre cheyne of love,
Gret was theffect, and heigh was his entente;
Wel wist he why, and what therof he mente;
For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
The fyr, the watir, the eyr, and eek the lond
In certeyn boundes, that they may not flee;
That same prynce and moevere eek,' quod he,
'Hath stabled, in this wrecched world adoun,
Certeyn dayes and duracioun
To alle that er engendrid in this place,
Over the *whiche* day they may nat pace,
Al mowe they yit wel here dayes abregge;
Ther needeth non auctorité tallegge;
For it is preved by experience,
But that me luste declare my sentence.
Than may men wel by this ordre discerne,
That thilke moevere stabul is and eterne.
Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
That every partye dyryveth from his hool.
For nature hath nat take his bygynnyng
Of no partye ne cantel of a thing,
But of a thing that parfyt is and stable,
Descendyng so, til it be corumpable.

And therfore of his wyse purveaunce
He hath so wel biset his ordenaunce,
That spices of thinges and progressiouns
Schullen endure by successiouns,
And nat eterne be withoute *any* lye:
This maistow understand and se at ye.
'Lo the ook, that hath so long norisschynge
Fro tyme that it gynneth first to springe,
And hath so long a lyf, as we may see,
Yet atte laste wasted is the tree.
'Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
Under oure foot, on which we trede and goon,
Yit wasteth it, as it lith by the weye.
The brode ryver som tyme wexeth dreye.
The grete townes see we wane and wende.
Then may I see that al thing hath an ende.
'Of man and womman se we wel also,
That wendeth in oon of this termes two,
That is to seyn, in youthe or elles in age,
He moot ben deed, the kyng as schal a page;
Sum in his bed, som in the deepe see,
Som in the large feeld, as men may se.
Ther helpeth naught, al goth thilke weye.
Thanne may I seie wel that al thing schal deye.
What maketh this but Jubiter the kyng?
The which is prynce and cause of alle thing,
Convertyng al unto his propre wille,
From which he is dereyned, soth to telle.
And here agayn no creature of lyve
Of no degré avayleth for to stryve.
'Than is it wisdom, as thenketh me,
To maken vertu of necessité,
And take it wel, that we may nat eschewe,

And namely that that to us alle is dewe.
And who-so gruccheth aught, he doth folye,
And rebel is to him that al may gye.
And certeynly a man hath most honour
To deyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name.
Than hath he doon his freend, ne him, no schame,
And glader ought his freend ben of his deth,
Whan with honour is yolden up the breth,
Thanne whan his name appalled is for age;
For al forgeten is his vasselage.
Thanne is it best, as for a worthi fame,
To dye whan a man is best of name.
The contrary of al this is wilfulnesse.
Why gruccheu we? why have we hevynesse,
That good Arcyte, of chyvalry the flour,
Departed is, with worschip and honour
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why gruccheth heer his cosyn and his wyf
Of his welfare, that loven him so wel?
Can he hem thank? nay, God woot, never a del,
That bothe his soule and eek hemself offende,
And yet they may here lustes nat amende.

'What may I conclude of this longe serye,
But aftir wo I rede us to be merye,
And thanke Jubiter of al his grace?
And or that we departe fro this place,
I rede that we make, of sorwes two,
O parfyt joye lastyng ever mo:
And loketh now wher most sorwe is her-inne,
Ther wol we first amenden and bygynne.

'Sustyr,' quod he, 'this is my ful assent,
With al thavys heer of my parlement,

That gentil Palomon, your owne knight,
That serveth yow with herte, wil, and might,
And ever hath doon, syn fyrst tyme ye him knewe,
That ye schul of your grace upon him rewe,
And take him for your housbond and for lord:
Lene me youre hand, for this is oure acord.
Let see now of your wommanly pité.
He is a kynges brothir sone, pardee;
And though he were a pore bachiller,
Syn he hath served you so many a yeer,
And had for you so gret adversité,
Hit moste be considered, trusteth me.
For gentil mercy aughte *to* passe right.'
Than seyde he thus to Palomon ful right;
'I trowe ther needeth litel sermonyng
To make you assente to this thing.
Com neer, and tak your lady by the hond.'
Betwix hem was i-maad anon the bond,
That highte matrimoyn or mariage,
By alle the counseil of the baronage.
And thus with blys and eek with melodye
Hath Palomon i-wedded Emelye.
And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it deere i-bought.
For now is Palomon in al his wele,
Lyvynge in blisse, richesse, and in hele,
And Emely him loveth so tendirly,
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
That never *was ther* wordes hem bitweene
Of gelousy, ne of non othir teene.
Thus endeth Palomon and Emelye;
And God save al this fayre companye! Amen!

THE PROLOGE OF THE MYLLER.

WHAN that the Knight hadde thus his tale i-told,
In al the route nas ther yong ne old,
That he ne seyde it was a noble story,
And worthi to be drawen in memory;
And namely the gentils everichoon.
Oure Host tho lowh and swoor, 'So moot I goon,
This goth right wel; unbokeled is the male;
Let se now who schal telle another tale;
For trewely this game is wel bygonne.
Now telleth now, sir Monk, if that ye konne
Somwhat, to quyte with the knightes tale.'
The Myller that for drunken was al pale,
So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,
He wold avale nowther hood ne hat,
Ne abyde no man for his curtesye,
But in Pilates voys he gan to crye,
And swor by armes and by blood and bones,
'I can a noble tale for the noones,
With which I wol now quyte the knightes tale.'
Oure Hoost saugh wel how dronke he was of ale,
And seyde, 'Robyn, abyde, my leve brother,
Som bettre man schal telle us first another;
Abyd, and let us worken thriftyly.'
'By Goddes soule!' quod he, 'that wol nat I,
For I wol speke, or elles go my way.'

Oure Host answerde, 'Tel on, a devel way!
Thou art a fool; thy witt is overcome.'
'Now herkneth,' quod this Myller, 'al and some;
But first I make a protestacioun,
That I am dronke, I knowe wel by my soun;
And therfore if that I mys-speke or seye,
Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye;
For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,
How that the clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.'
The Reve answered and seyde, 'Stynt thi clappe.
Let be thy lewede drunken harlottrye.
It is a synne, and eek a greet folye
To apeyren eny man, or him defame,
And eek to bryngo wyves in ylle name.
Thou mayst ynowgh of other thinges seyn.'
This dronken Miller spak ful sone ageyn,
And seyde, 'Leeve brother Osewold,
Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.
But I seye not therfore that thou art oon,
Ther been ful goode wyves many oon.
And ever a thousand goode agayns oon badde;
That knowest thou wel thyself, but if thou madde.
Why art thou angry with my tale now?
I have a wyf, pardé! as wel as thow,
Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plough,
Take upon me more than ynough;
Though that thou deme thiself that thou be oon.
I wol bileeve wel that I am noon.
An housbond schal not be inquisityf
Of Goddes pryveté, ne of his wyf.
So that he fynde Goddes foysoun there,
Of the remenaunt needeth nought enquere.'

What schuld I seye, but that this proude Myllere
He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
But tolde his cherlisch tale in his manere.
Me athinketh, that I schal reherce it heere;
And therfor every gentil wight I preye,
For Goddes love, as deme nat that I seye,
Of yvel entent, but for I moot reherse
Here wordes alle, al be they better or werse,
Or elles falsen som of my mateere.
And therfor who-so list it nat to heere,
Turne over the leef, and cheese another tale;
For he schal fynde ynowe bothe gret and smale,
Of storial thing that toucheth gentilesse,
And eek *moralité*, and holynesse.
Blameth nat me, if that ye cheese amys.
The Miller is a cherl, ye knowe wel this;
So was the Reeve, and othir many mo,
And harlotry they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth you, and put me out of blame;
And men schulde nat make ernest of game.

THE MILLERES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwellyng at Oxenford
A riche gnof, that gestes heeld to boorde,
And of his craft he was a carpenter.
With him ther was dwellyng a pore scoler,
Had*de* lerned art, but al his fantasye
Was torned for to lerne astrologye,

And cowde a certeyn of conclusiouns
To deme by interrogaciouns,
If that men axed him in certeyn houres,
Whan that men schuld han drought or ellys schoures,
Or if men axed him what schulde bifalle
Of everything, I may nought reken hem alle.
This clerk was cleped heende Nicholas;
Of derne love he cowde and of solas;
And therwith he was sleigh and ful privé,
And lik *to* a mayden meke for to se.
A chambir had he in that hostillerye
Alone, withouten eny compaignye,
Ful fetisly i-dight with herbes soote,
And he himself as swete as is the roote
Of lokorys, or eny cetewale.
His almagest, and bookes gret and smale,
His astrylabe, longyng *to* his art,
His augrym stoones, leyen faire apart
On schelves couched at his beddes heed,
His presse i-covered with a faldyng reed.
And al above ther lay a gay sawtrye,
On which he made a-nightes melodye,
So swetely, that al the chambur rang;
And *Angelus ad virginem* he sang.
And after that he sang the kynges note;
Ful often blissed was his mery throte,
And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spente,
After his frendes fyndyng and his rente.
This carpenter had*de* weddid newe a wyf,
Which that he lovede more than his lyf;
Of eyghteteene yeer sche was of age,
Gelous he was, and heeld hir narwe in cage,

For sche was wilde and yong, and he was old.
And demed himself belik a cokewold,
He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude,
That bad man schulde wedde his similitude.
Men schulde wedde aftir here astaat,
For eelde and youthe ben often at debaat.
But syn that he was brought into the snare,
He moste endure, as othere doon, his care.

Fair was the yonge wyf, and therwithal
As eny wesil hir body gent and smal.
A seynt sche werede, barred al of silk;
A barm-cloth eek as whit as morne mylk
Upon hir lendes, ful of many a gore.
Whit was hir smok, and browdid al byfore
And eek byhynde on hir coler aboute,
Of cole-blak silk, withinne and eek withoute.
The tapes of hir white voluper
Weren of the same sute of hire coler;
Hir filet brood of silk y-set ful heye.
And certeynly sche hadd a licorous eyghe;
Ful smal y-pulled weren hir browes two,
And tho were bent, as blak as *any* sloo.
Sche was wel more blisful on to see
Than is the newe perjonette tree;
And softer than the wol is of a wethir.
And by hir gurdil hyng a purs of lethir,
Tassid with silk, and perled with latoun.
In al this world to seken up and doun
There nys no man so wys, that couthe thenche
So gay a popillot, or such a wenche.
For brighter was the *schynyng* of hir hewe,
Than in the Tour the noble i-forged newe.
But of hir song, it was as lowde and yerne

As eny swalwe chiteryng on a berne.
Therto sche cowde skippe, and make *a* game,
As eny kyde or calf folwyng his dame.
Hir mouth was sweete as bragat is or meth,
Or hoord of apples, layd in hay or heth.
Wynsyng sche was, as is a joly colt;
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
A broch sche bar upon hir loue coleer,
As brod as is the bos of a bocleer.
Hir schos were laced on hir legges heyghe;
Sche was a primerole and a piggesneyghe,
For eny lord have liggyng in his bedde,
Or yet for eny good yeman to wedde.

Now sir, and eft sir, so bifel the cas,
That on a day this heende Nicholas
Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye
Whil that hir housbond was at Oseneye,
As clerkes ben ful sotil and ful queynte.
And pryvely he caught hir by the queynte,
And seyde, 'I-wis, but if I have my wille,
For derne love of the, lemman, I spille.'
And heeld hir harde by the haunche boones,
And seyde, 'Lemman, love me *wel* at ones,
Or I wol dye, as wisly God me save.'

And sche sprang out as doth a colt in trave:
And with hir heed sche wriede fast awey,
And seyde, 'I wol nat kisse the, by my fey!
Why let be,' quod sche, 'lat be thou, Nicholas
Or I wol crye out harrow and allas!
Do wey youre handes for youre curtesye!'
This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,
And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,
That sche hir love him graunted atte laste,

And swor hir oth by seynt Thomas of Kent,
That sche wol*de* be at his commaundement,
Whan that sche may hir leysir wel aspye.
'Myn housbond is so ful of jelousie,
That but ye wayten wel, and be pryvé,
I woot right wel I am but deed,' quod sche:
'Ye mosten be ful derne as in this caas.'
'Therof ne care the nought,' quod Nicholas:
'A clerk hath litherly byset his while,
But if he cowde a carpenter bygyle.'
And thus they ben acorded and i-sworn
To wayte a tyme, as I have told biforn.
Whan Nicholas had*de* doon thus every del,
And thakked hire aboute the lendys wel,
He kist hir sweet, and taketh his sawtrye,
And pleyeth fast, and maketh melodye.
Than fyl it thus, that to the parisch chirche
Cristes owen workes for to wirche,
This goode wyf went on an haly day;
Hir forheed schon as bright as eny day,
So was it waisschen, whan sche leet hir werk.
Now ther was of that chirche a parisch clerk,
The which that was i-cleped Absolon.
Crulle was his heer, and as the gold it schon,
And strowted as a fan right large and brood;
Ful streyt and evene lay his joly schood.
His rode was reed, his eyghen gray as goos,
With Powles wyndowes corven in his schoos.
In his hoses reed he wente fetusly.
I-clad he was ful smal and propurly,
Al in a kirtel of a fyn wachet,
Schapen with goores in the newe get.
And therupon he had a gay surplys,

As whyt as is the blosme upon the rys.
A mery child he was, so God me save;
Wel couthe he lete blood, and clippe and schave,
And make a chartre of lond and acquitaunce.
In twenty maners he coude skippe and daunce,
After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
And with his legges casten to and fro;
And pleyen songes on a smal rubible;
Ther-to he sang som tyme a lowde quynyble.
And as wel coude he pleye on a giterne.
In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
That he ne visitede with his solas,
Ther as *that* any gaylard tapster was.
Bot soth to say he was somdel squaymous
Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous.
This Absolon, that joly was and gay,
Goth with a senser on the haly day,
Sensing the wyves of the parisch faste;
And many a lovely look on hem he caste,
And namely on this carpenteres wyf;
To loke on hire him thought a mery lyf;
Sche was so propre, sweete, and licorous.
I dar wel sayn, if sche hadde ben a mous,
And he a cat, he wold hir hent anoon.

This parisch clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte such a love longyng,
That of no wyf ne took he noon offryng;
For curtesy, he seyde, he wolde noon.
The moone at night ful cleer and brighte schoon,
And Absolon his giterne hath i-take,
For paramours he seyde he wold awake.
And forth he goth, jolyf and amerous,
Til he cam to the carpenteres hous,

A litel after the cok hadde y-crowe,
And dressed him up by a schot wyndowe
That was under the carpenteres walle.
He syngeth in his voys gentil and smalle—
'Now, deere lady, if thi wille be,
I praye yow that ye wol rewe on me.'
Ful wel acordyng to his gyternynge.
This carpenter awook, and herde him synge,
And spak unto his wyf, and sayde anoon,
'What Alisoun, herestow not Absolon,
That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal?'
And sche answered hir housbond therwithal.
'Yis, God woot, Johan, I heere it every del.'
This passeth forth; what wil ye bet than wel?
Fro day to day this joly Absolon
So woweth hire, that him is wo-bigon.
He waketh al the night and al the day,
To kembe his lokkes brode and made him gay.
He woweth hire by mene and by brocage,
And swor he wolde ben hir owne page.
He syngeth crowyng as a nightyngale;
And sent hire pyment, meth, and spiced ale,
And wafres pypyng hoot out of the gleede;
And for sche was of toune, he profrede meede.
For som folk wol be wonne for richesse,
And som for strokes, som for gentillesse.
Som tyme, to schewe his lightnes and maistrye,
He pleyeth Herodz on a scaffold hye.
But what avayleth him as in this caas?
Sche loveth so this heende Nicholas,
That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn;
He ne hadde for al his labour but a skorn.
And thus sche maketh Absolon hir ape,

And al his ernest torneth to a jape.
Ful soth is this proverbe, it is no lye,
Men seyn right thus alway, the neye slye
Maketh the ferre leefe to be loth.
For though that Absolon be wood or wroth,
Bycause that he fer was from here sight,
This Nicholas hath stonden in his light.
Now bere the wel, thou heende Nicholas,
For Absolon may wayle and synge allas.
And so bifelle it on a Satyrday
This carpenter was gon to Oseney,
And heende Nicholas and Alisoun
Acordid ben to this conclusioun,
That Nicholas schal schapen hem a wyle
This sely jelous housbond to begyle;
And if so were this game wente aright,
Sche schulde slepe in his arm al night,
For this was hire desir and his also.
And right anoon, withouten wordes mo,
This Nicholas no lenger wold he tarye,
But doth ful softe into his chambur carye
Both mete and drynke for a day or tweye.
And to hir housbond bad hir for to seye,
If that he axed after Nicholas,
Sche schulde seye, sche wiste nat wher he was;
Of al that day sche saw him nat with eye;
Sche trowed he were falle in som maladye,
For no cry that hir mayden cowde him calle
He nolde answere, for nought that may bifalle.
Thus passeth forth al that ilke Satyrday,
That Nicholas stille in his chambre lay,
And eet, and drank, and dede what him leste
Til Soneday the sonne was gon to reste.

This sely carpenter hath gret mervaile
Of Nicholas, or what thing may him ayle.
And seyde, 'I am adrad, by seynt Thomas!
It stondeth nat aright with Nicholas;
God schilde that he deyde sodeinly.
This world is now ful tykel sikerly;
I saugh to-day a corps y-born to chirche,
That now on Monday last I saugh him wirche.
Go up,' quod he unto his knave, 'anoon;
Clepe at his dore, and knokke with a stoon;
Loke how it is, and telle me boldely.'
This knave goth him up ful sturdily,
And at the chambir dore whil *that* he stood,
He cryed and knokked as that he were wood;
'What how? what do ye, mayster Nicholay!
How may ye slepen al this longe day?'
But al for nought, he herde nat o word.
An hole he fond right lowe upon a boord,
Ther as the cat was wont in for to creepe,
And at that hole he loked in ful deepe,
And atte laste he hadde of him a sight.
This Nicholas sat ever gapyng upright,
As he had*de* loked on the newe moone.
Adoun he goth, and tolde his mayster soone,
In what aray he sawh this ilke man.
This carpenter to blessen him bygan,
And seyde, 'Now help us, seynte Frideswyde!
A man woot litel what him schal betyde.
This man is falle with his astronomye
In som woodnesse, or in som agonye.
I thought ay wel how that it schulde be.
Men schulde nought knowe of Goddes pryvyté.
Ye! blessed be alwey a lewed man,

That nat but oonly his bileeve can.
So ferde another clerk with astronomye;
He walked in the feeldes for to prye
Upon the sterres, what ther schulde bifalle,
Til he was in a marle pit i-falle.
He saugh nat that. But yet, by seint Thomas!
Me reweth sore for heende Nicholas;
He schal be ratyd of his studyyng,
If that I may, by Jhesu heven kyng!
Gete me a staf, that I may underspore,
Whil that thou, Robyn, hevest up the dore:
He schal out of his studyyng, as I gesse.'
And to the chambir dore he gan him dresse.
His knave was a strong karl for the noones,
And by the hasp he haf it up at oones;
And in the floor the dore fil doun anoon.
This Nicholas sat stille as eny stoon,
And ever he gapyed up-ward to the eyr.
This carpenter wende he were in despeir,
And hent him by the schuldres mightily,
And schook him harde, and cryede spitously,
'What, Nicholas? what how, man? loke adoun;
Awake, and thynk on Cristes passioun.
I crowche the from elves and from wightes.'
Therwith the night-spel seyde he anon rightes,
On the foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the threisshfold of the dore withoute.
'Lord Jhesu Crist, and seynte Benedight,
Blesse this hous from every wikkede wight,
Fro nyghtes *mare werye* the *with* Pater-noster;
Wher wonestow now, seynte Petres soster?'
And atte laste, heende Nicholas
Gan for to syke sore, and seyde, 'Allas!

Schal al the world be lost eftsones now?'
This carpenter answerde, 'What seystow?
What? thenk on God, as we doon, men that swynke.'
This Nicholas answerde, 'Fette me drynke;
And after wol I speke in pryvytè
Of certeyn thing that toucheth the and me:
I wol telle it non other man certayn.'
This carpenter goth forth, and comth agayn,
And brought of mighty ale a large quart.
Whan ech of hem y-dronken had his part,
This Nicholas his dore gan to schitte,
And dede this carpenter doun by him sitte,
And seide, 'Johan, myn host ful leve and deere,
Thou schalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere,
That to no wight thou schalt this counsel wreye,
For it is Cristes counsel that I seye,
And if thou telle it man, thou art forlore;
For this vengaunce thou schalt han therfore,
That if thou wreye me, thou schalt be wood.'
'Nay, Crist forbede it for his holy blood!'
Quod tho this sely man, 'I am no labbe,
Though I it say, I am nought leef to gabbe.
Say what thou wolt, I schal it never telle
To child ne wyf, by him that harwed helle!'
'Now, Johan,' quod Nicholas,' 'I wol not lye:
I have i-founde in myn astrologye,
As I have loked in the moone bright,
That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
Schal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood,
That half so gret was never Noes flood.
This worlde,' he seyde, 'more than an hour
Schal ben i-dreynt, so hidous is the schour:
Thus schal mankynde drench, and leese his lyf.'

This carpenter answered, 'Allas, my wyf!
And shal she drenche? allas, myn Alisoun!'
For sorwe of this he fel almost adoun,
And seyde, 'Is ther no remedy in this caas?'
'Why yis, for Gode,' quod heende Nicholas;
'If thou wolt werken aftir lore and reed;
Thou maist nought worke after thin owen heed.
For thus seith Salomon, that was ful trewe,
Werke by counseil, and thou schalt nat rewe.
And if thou worken wolt by good counsail,
I undertake, withouten mast and sail,
Yet schal I saven hir, and the, and me.
Hastow nat herd how saved was Noe,
Whan that our Lord hadde warned him biforn,
That al the world with watir schulde be lorn?'
'Yis,' quod this carpenter, 'ful yore ago,'
'Hast ow nought herd,' quod Nicholas, 'also
The sorwe of Noe with his felaschipe,
That he hadde or he gat his wyf to schipe?
Him hadde wel lever, I dar wel undertake,
At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,
That sche hadde a schip hirself allone.
And therfore wostow what is best to doone?
This axeth hast, and of an hasty thing
Men may nought preche or make taryyng
Anon go gete us fast into this in
A knedyng trowh or elles a kemelyn,
For ech of us; but loke that they be large,
In which that we may rowe as in a barge,
And have therin vitaille suffisant
But for o day; fy on the remenant;
The water schal aslake and gon away
Aboute prime upon the nexte day.

But Robyn may not wite of this, thy knave,
Ne ek thy mayde Gille I may not save;
Aske nought why; for though thou aske me,
I wol nat tellen Goddes pryveté.
Sufficeth the, but if that thy wittes madde,
To have as gret a grace as Noe hadde.
Thy wyf schal I wel saven out of doute.
Go now thy wey, and speed the heer aboute:
And whan thou hast for hir, and the, and me,
I-goten us this knedyng tubbes thre,
Than schalt thou hange hem in the roof ful hie,
That no man of oure purveaunce aspye;
And whan thou thus hast doon as I have seyd,
And hast our vitaille faire in hem y-leyd,
And eek an ax to smyte the corde a-two
Whan that the water cometh, that we may goo,
And breke an hole an hye upon the gable
Into the gardyn ward over the stable,
That we may frely passen forth oure way,
Whan that the grete schour is gon away;
Than schaltow swymme as mery, I undertake,
As doth the white doke aftir hir drake;
Than wol I clepe, How Alisoun, how Jon,[1]
Beoth merye, for the flood passeth anon.
And thou wolt seye, Heyl, maister Nicholay,
Good morn, I see the wel, for it is day.
And than schul we be lordes al oure lyf
Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.
But of oo thing I warne the ful right,
Be wel avysed of that ilke nyght,
That we ben entred into schippes boord,
That non of us ne speke not a word,
Ne clepe ne crye, but be in his preyere,

For it is Goddes owne heste deere.
Thy wyf and thou most hangen fer a-twynne,
For that bitwixe you schal be no synne,
No more in lokyng than ther schal in dede.
This ordynaunce is seyd; so God me speede.
To morwe at night, whan men ben aslepe,
Into our knedyng tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitte ther, abydyng Goddes grace.
Go now thy way, I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermonyng;
Men seyn thus, send the wyse, and sey no thing;
Thou art so wys, it needeth nat the teche.
Go, save oure lyf, and that I the byseche.'
This seely carpenter goth forth his way,
Ful ofte he seyd, 'Allas, and weylaway!'
And to his wyf he told his pryveté,
And sche was war, and knew it bet than he,
What al this *queinte* caste was for to seye.
But natheles sche ferd as sche schulde deye,
And seyde, 'Allas! go forth thy way anoon,
Help us to skape, or we be ded echon.
I am thy verray trewe wedded wyf;
Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf.'
Lo, which a gret thing is affeccioun!
A man may dye for ymaginacioun,
So deepe may impressioun be take.
This seely carpenter bygynneth quake;
Him thenketh verrayly that he may se
Noes flood come walking as the see
To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.
He weepeth, wayleth, he maketh sory cheere;
He siketh, with ful many a sory swough,
And goth, and geteth him a knedyng trough

And after that a tubbe, and a kymelyn,
And pryvely he sent hem to his in,
And heng hem in the roof in pryveté.
His owne honde than made *he* laddres thre,
To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes
Unto the tubbes hangyng in the balkes;
And hem vitaylede, bothe trough and tubbe,
With breed and cheese, with good ale in a jubbe,
Suffisyng right ynough as for a day.
But or that he hadde maad al this array,
He sent his knave and eek his wenche also
Upon his neede to Londone for to go.
And on the Monday, whan it drew to nyght,
He schette his dore, withouten candel light,
And dressed al this thing as it schulde be.
And schortly up they clumben alle thre.
They seten stille wel a forlong way:
'Now, *Pater noster*, clum,' quod Nicholay,
And 'clum,' quod Jon, and 'clum,' quod Alisoun.
This carpenter seyd his devocioun,
And stille he sitt, and byddeth his prayere,
Ay waytyng on the reyn, if he it heere.
The deede sleep, for verray busynesse,
Fil on this carpenter, right as I gesse,
Abowten courfew tyme, or litel more.
For travail of his goost he groneth sore,
And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay.
Doun of the laddir stalketh Nicholay,
And Alisoun ful softe adoun hir spedde.
Withouten wordes mo they goon to bedde;
Ther as the carpenter was wont to lye,
Ther was the revel and the melodye.
And thus lith Alisoun and Nicholas,

In busynesse of myrthe and of solas,
Til that the belles of laudes gan to rynge,
And freres in the chauncel gan to synge.
This parissch clerk, this amerous Absolon,
That is for love so harde and woo bygon,
Upon the Monday was at Osenaye
With company, him to desporte and playe;
And axed upon caas a cloysterer
Ful pryvely after the carpenter;
And he drough him apart out of the chirche,
And sayde, 'Nay, I say him nat here wirche
Syn Satirday: I trow that he be went
For tymber, ther our abbot hath him sent.
For he is wont for tymber for to goo,
And dwellen at the Graunge a day or tuo.
Or elles he is at his hous certayn.
Wher that he be, I can nat sothly sayn.'
This Absolon ful joly was and light,
And thoughte, 'Now is tyme *to* wake al night,
For sikerly I sawh him nought styrynge
Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to sprynge.
So mote I thryve, I schal at cokkes crowe
Ful pryvely go knokke at his wyndowe,
That stant ful lowe upon his bowres wal;
To Alisoun than wol I tellen al
My love-longyng; for yet I schal not mysse
That atte leste wey I schal hir kisse.
Som maner comfort schal I have, parfay!
My mouth hath icched al this longe day;
That is a signe of kissyng atte leste.
Al nyght I mette eek I was at a feste.
Therfore I wol go slepe an hour or tweye,
And al the night than wol I wake and pleye.'

Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anoon
Up ryst this jolyf lover Absolon,
And him arrayeth gay, at poynt devys.
But first he cheweth greyn and lycoris,
To smellen swete, or he hadde kempt his heere.
Under his tunge a trewe love he beere,
For therby wende he to be gracious.
He rometh to the carpenteres hous,
And stille he stant under the schot wyndowe;
Unto his brest it raught, it was so lowe;
And softe he cowhith with a semysoun:
'What do ye, honycomb, swete Alisoun?
My fayre bryd, my swete cynamome,
Awake, lemman myn, and speketh to me.
Ful litel thynke ye upon my wo,
That for youre love I swelte ther I go.
No wonder is if that I swelte and swete,
I morne as doth a lamb after the tete.
I-wis, lemman, I have such love-longyng,
That like a turtil trewe is my moornyng.
I may not ete no more than a mayde.'
'Go fro the wyndow, jakke fool,' sche sayde;
'As help me God, it wol not be, compaine.
I love another, and elles were I to blame,
Wel bet than the, by Jhesu, Absolon.
Go forth thy wey, or I wol cast a stoon;
And let me slepe, a twenty devel way!'
'Allas!' quod Absolon, 'and weylaway!
That trewe love was ever so ylle bysett;
Thanne kisseth me, syn it may be no bett,
For Jesus love, and for the love of me.'
'Wilt thou than go thy wey therwith?' quod sche.
'Ye, certes, lemman,' quod this Absolon.

'Than mak the redy,' quod sche, 'I come anon.'
This Absolon doun sette him on his knees,
And seide, 'I am a lord at alle degrees;
For after this I hope ther cometh more;
Lemman, thy grace, and, swete bryd, thyn ore.'
The wyndow sche undyd, and that in hast;
'Have doon,' quod sche, 'com of, and speed the fast,
Lest that our neygheboures the aspye.'
This Absolon gan wipe his mouth ful drye,
Derk was the night as picche or as a cole,
Out atte wyndow putte sche hir hole:
And Absolon him fel no bet ne wers,
But with his mouth he kist hir naked ers
Ful savorly. Whan he was war of this,
Abak he sterte, and thought it was amys,
For wel he wist a womman hath no berd.
He felt a thing al rough and long i-herd,
And seyde, 'Fy, allas! what have I do?'
'Te-hee!' quod sche, and clapte the wyndow to;
And Absolon goth forth a sory paas.
'A berd, a berd!' quod heende Nicholas;
'By Goddes corps, this game goth fair and wel.'
This seely Absolon herd every del,
And on his lippe he gan for angir byte;
And to himself he seyde, 'I schal the quyte.'
Who rubbith now, who froteth now his lippes
With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with chippes,
But Absolon? that seith ful ofte, 'Allas,
My soule bytake I unto Sathanas!
But me were lever than alle this toun,' quod he,
'Of this dispit awroken for to be.

Allas!' quod he, 'allas! I nadde *y*-bleynt!'
His hoote love was cold, and al i-queint.
For fro that tyme that he hadde kist her ers,
Of paramours ne sette he nat a kers,
For he was helyd of his maledye;
Ful ofte paramours he gan deffye,
And wept as doth a child that is i-bete.
A softe paas went he over the strete
Unto a smyth, men clepith daun Gerveys,
That in his forge smythede plowh-harneys;
He scharpeth schar and cultre bysily.
This Absolon knokketh al esily,
And seyde, 'Undo, Gerveys, and that anoon.'
'What, who art thou?' 'It am I Absolon.'
'What? Absolon, what for Cristes swete tree!
Why ryse ye so rathe? *benedicite*,
What eyleth you? some gay gurl, God it woot,
Hath brought you thus upon the verytrot;
By seinte Noet! ye wote wel what I mene.'
This Absolon ne roughte nat a bene
Of al this pley, no word agayn he yaf;
For he hadde more tow on his distaf
Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, 'Freend so deere,
That hote cultre in the chymney heere
As lene it me, I have therwith to doone;
I wol it bring agayn to the ful soone.'
Gerveys answerde, 'Certes, were it gold,
Or in a poke nobles al untold,
Ye schul him have, as I am trewe smyth.
Ey, Cristes fote! what wil ye do therwith?'
'Therof,' quod Absolon, 'be as be may;
I schal wel telle it the to morwe day;'

And caughte the cultre by the colde stele.
Ful soft out at the dore he gan it stele,
And wente unto the carpenteres wal.
He cowheth first, and knokketh therwithal
Upon the wyndow, right as he dede er.
This Alisoun answerde, 'Who is ther
That knokketh so? I warant it a theef.'
'Why nay,' quod he, 'God woot, my sweete leef,
I am thyn Absolon, o my derlyng.
Of gold,' quod he, 'I have the brought a ryng;
My mooder yaf it me, so God me save!
Ful fyn it is, and therto wel i-grave;
This wol I yive the, if thou me kisse.'
This Nicholas was risen for to pysse,
And thought he wold amenden al the jape,
He schulde kisse his ers or that he skape.
And up the wyndow dyde he hastily,
And out his ers putteth he pryvely
Over the buttok, to *the* haunche bon.
And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon,
'Spek, sweete bryd, I wot nat wher thou art.'
This Nicholas anon let flee a fart,
As gret as it hadde ben a thundir dent,
And with that strook he was almost i-blent;
And he was redy with his yren hoot,
And Nicholas amid the ers he smoot.
Of goth the skyn an hande brede aboute,
The hoote cultre brente so his toute;
And for the smert he wende for to dye;
As he were wood, anon he gan to crye,
'Help, watir, watir, help, for Goddes herte!'
This carpenter out of his slumber sterte,
And herd on crye watir, as he wer wood.

He thought, 'Allas, for now cometh Noes flood!'
He sit him up withoute wordes mo,
And with his ax he smot the corde a-two;
And doun he goth; he fond nowthir to selle
No breed ne ale, til he com to the selle
Upon the floor, and ther aswoun he lay.
Up styrt hir Alisoun, and Nicholay,
And cryden, 'out and harrow!' in the strete.
The neyghebores bothe smal and grete,
In ronnen, for to gauren on this man,
That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan;
For with the fal he brosten had his arm.
But stond he muste to his owne harm,
For whan he spak, he was anon born doun
With heende Nicholas and Alisoun.
They tolden every man that he was wood;
He was agast and feerd of Noes flood
Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanité
He hadde i-bought him knedyng tubbes thre,
And hadde hem hanged in the roof above;
And that he preyed hem for Goddes love
To sitten in the roof *par compaignye*.
The folk gan lawhen at his fantasye;
Into the roof they kyken, and they gape,
And torne al his harm into a jape.
For whatsoever the carpenter answerde,
Hit was for nought, no man his resoun herde,
With othis greet he was so sworn adoun,
That he was holden wood in al the toun.
For every clerk anon right heeld with othir;
They seyde, 'The man was wood, my leeve brother;'
And every man gan lawhen at his stryf.

Thus swyved was the carpenteres wyf
For al his kepyng and his gelousye;
And Absolon hath kist hir nethir ye;
And Nicholas is skaldid in his towte.
This tale is doon, and God save al the route.

THE PROLOGE OF THE REEVE.

WHAN folk hadde lawhen of this nyce caas
Of Absolon and heende Nicholas,
Dyverse folk dyversely they seyde,
But for the moste part they lowh and pleyde;
Ne at this tale I sawh no man him greve,
But it were oonly Osewald the Reeve.
Bycause he was of carpentrye craft,
A litel ire is in his herte laft;
He gan to grucche and blamed it a lite.
'So theek,' quod he, 'ful wel coude I the quyte
With bleryng of a prowd mylleres ye,
If that me luste speke of ribaudye.
But yk am old; me list not pleye for age;
Gras tyme is doon, my foddir is now forage.
My whyte top writeth myn olde yeeres;
Myn hert is al so moulyd as myn heeres;
But yit I fare as doth an open-ers;
That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,
Til it be rote in mullok or in stree.
We olde men, I drede, so fare we,
Til we be roten, can we nat be rype;
We hoppen alway, whil the world wol pype;
For in oure wil ther stiketh ever a nayl,
To have an hoor heed and a greene tayl,
As hath a leek; for though oure might be doon,

Oure wil desireth folye ever in oon;
For whan we may nat do, than wol we speke,
Yet in oure aisshen old is fyr i-reke.
Foure gledys have we, which I schal devyse,
Avanting, lyyng angur, coveytise.
This foure sparkys longen unto eelde.
Oure olde lymes mowen be unweelde,
But wil ne schal nat fayle us, that is soth.
And yet I have alwey a coltes toth,
As many a yeer as it is passed henne,
Syn that my tappe of lyf bygan to renne.
For sikirlik, whan I was born, anon
Deth drough the tappe of lyf, and leet it goon;
And now so longe hath the tappe i-ronne,
Til that almost al empty is the tonne.
The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe.
The sely tonge may wel rynge and chimbe
Of wrecchednes, that passed is ful yoore:
With olde folk, sauf dotage, is no more.'

Whan that oure Host had*de* herd this sermonyng,
He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng,
And seyde, 'What amounteth al this wit?
What? schul we speke al day of holy wryt?
The devyl made a reve for to preche,
Or of a sowter, schipman or a leche.
Sey forth thi tale, and tarye nat the tyme;
Lo heer is Depford, and it is passed prime;
Lo Grenewich, ther many a schrewe is inne;
It were al tyme thi tale *for* to bygynne.'

'Now, sires,' quod this Osewold the Reeve,
'I pray yow alle, that noon of you him greeve,
Though I answere, and somwhat sette his howve,

For leeful is with force force to showve.
This dronken Myllere hath i-tolde us heer,
How that bygiled was a carpenter,
Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon;
And by your leve, I schal him quyte anoon.
Right in his cherles termes wol I speke;
I praye to God his nekke mot to-breke!
He can wel in myn eye seen a stalke,
But in his owne he can nought seen a balke.'

THE REEVES TALE.

AT Trompyngtoun, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge,
Upon the whiche brook ther stant a melle:
And this is verray sothe that I you telle.
A meller was ther dwellyng many a day,
As eny pecok he was prowd and gay;
Pipen he coude, and fissh, and nettys beete,
And turne cuppes, wrastle wel, and scheete.
Ay by his belt he bar a long panade,
And of a swerd ful trenchaunt was the blade.
A joly popper bar he in his pouche;
Ther was no man for perel durst him touche.
A Scheffeld thwitel bar he in his hose.
Round was his face, and camois was his nose.
As pyled as an ape was his skulle.

He was a market-beter at the fulle.
Ther durste no wight hand upon him legge,
That he ne swor anon he schuld abegge.
A theef he was, for-soth, of corn and mele,
And that a sleigh, and usyng for to stele.
His name was hoote deynous Symekyn.
A wyf he hadde, come of noble kyn;
The persoun of the toun hir fader was.
With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras,
For that Symkyn schuld in his blood allye.
Sche was i-fostryd in a nonnerye;
For Symkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde
But sche were wel i-norissched and a mayde,
To saven his estaat and yomanrye.
And sche was proud and pert as is a pye.
A ful fair sighte was ther *upon* hem two;
On haly dayes bifore hir wold he go
With his typet y-bounde about his heed;
And sche cam aftir in a gyte of reed,
And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same.
Ther durste no wight clepe hir but *madame;*
Was noon so hardy walkyng by the weye,
That with hir dorste rage or elles pleye,
But if he wolde be slayn of Symekyn
With panade, or with knyf, or boydekyn;
For gelous folk ben perilous everemo,
Algate they wolde here wyves wende so.
And eek for sche was somdel smoterlich,
Sche was as deyne as water in a dich,
As ful of hokir, and of bissemare.
Hir thoughte ladyes oughten hir to spare,
What for hir kynreed and hir nortelrye,
That sche had*de* lerned in the nonnerye.

O doughter hadden they betwix hem two,
Of twenti yeer, withouten eny mo,
Savyng a child that was of half yer age
In cradil lay, and was a proper page.
This wenche thikke and wel i-growen was,
With camoys nose, and eyghen gray as glas;
And buttokkes brode, and brestes round and hye,
But right fair was hir heer, I wol nat lye.
The persoun of the toun, for sche was feir,
In purpos was to maken hir his heir,
Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,
And straunge made it of hir marlage.
His purpos was to bystowe hir hye
Into som worthy blood of ancetrye;
For holy chirche good moot be despendid
On holy chirche blood that is descendid.
Therfore he wolde his joly blood honoure,
Though that he schulde holy chirche devoure.

Gret soken hadde this meller, oute of doute,
With whete and malt, of al the londe aboute;
And namely ther was a gret collegge,
Men clepe it the Soler-halle of Cantebregge,
Ther was here whete and eek here malt i-grounde.
And on a day it happed on a stounde,
Syk lay the maunciple on a maledye,
Men wenden wisly that he schulde dye;
For which this meller stal both mele and corn
A thousend part more than byforn.
For ther biforn he stal but curteysly;
But now he is a theef outrageously.
For which the wardeyn chidde and made fare,
But therof sette the meller not a tare;
He crakkede boost, and swor it was nat so.

Thanne weren there poore scoleres tuo,
That dwelten in the halle of which I seye;
Testyf they were, and lusty for to pleye;
And, oonly for here mirthe and revelrye,
Uppon the wardeyn bysily they crye,
To yeve hem leve but a litel stounde
To go to melle and see here corn i-grounde;
And hardily they dursten ley here nekke,
The meller schulde nat stel hem half a pekke
Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve.
And atte last the wardeyn yaf hem leve.
Johan hight that oon, and Alayn hight that other;
Of o toun were they born that highte Strothir,
Fer in the North, I can nat telle where.
This Aleyn maketh redy al his gere,
And on an hors the sak he cast anoon:
Forth goth Aleyn the clerk, and also Jon,
With good swerd and with bocler by her side.
Johan knew the way, that hem needith no gyde;
And at the mylle the sak adoun he layth.
Alayn spak first: 'Al heil! Symond, in faith
How fares thy faire doughter and thy wyf?'
'Alayn, welcome,' quod Symond, 'by my lyf!
And Johan also; how now! what do ye here?
'By God!' quod Johan, 'Symond, neede has na peere.
Him falles serve himself that has na swayn,
Or elles he is a fon, as clerkes sayn.
Our mancyple, as I hope, wil be deed,
Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed.
And therfore I is come, and eek Aleyn,
To grynde oure corn, and carie it ham ageyn.

I prey you speed us in al that ye may.'
'It schal be doon,' quod Symkyn, 'by my fay!
What wol ye do whil that it is in hande?'
'By God! right by the hoper wol I stande,'
Quod Johan, 'and se how that the corn gas inne.
Yet sawh I never, by my fader kynne!
How that the hoper waggis to and fra.'
Aleyn answerde, 'Johan, and wiltow swa?
Than wol I be bynethe, by my croun!
And se how that the mele fallys doun
Into the trough, that schal be my desport;
For Jon, in faith, I may be of youre sort,
I is as ille a meller as ere ye.'
This mellere smyleth for here nyceté,
And thought, 'Al this is doon but for a wyle;
They wenen that no man may hem bigile.
But, by my thrift, yet schal I blere here ye,
For al here sleight and al here philosophie;
The more queynte knakkes that they make,
The more wol I stele whan I take.
In stede of mele, yet wol I yeve hem bren.
The grettest clerkes beth not wisest men,
As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare;
Of al here art ne counte I nat a tare.'
Out at the dore he goth ful pryvyly,
Whan that he saugh this tyme sotyly;
He loketh up and doun, til he hath founde
The clerkes hors, ther as it stood i-bounde
Behynde the mylle, under a levesel;
And to the hors he goth him faire and wel.
He strepeth of the bridel right anoon.
And whan the hors was loos, he gan to goon
Toward the fenne, a wilde mares renne,

Forth with 'wi-he!' thurgh thikke and eek thurgh thenne.
This meller goth agayn, and no word seyde,
But doth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde,
Til that here corn was fair and wel i-grounde.
And whan the mele was sakked and i-bounde,
This Johan goth out, and fynt his hors away,
And gan to crye, 'Harrow and weylaway!
Oure hors is loste! Aleyn, for Goddes banes,
Step on thy feet, cum on, man, al at anes.
Allas! our wardeyn hath his palfray lorn!'
This Aleyn al forgeteth mele and corn,
Al was out of his mynd his housbondrye;
'What, whilke way is he gan?' gan he crye.
The wyf cam lepyng in-ward with a ren,
Sche seyde, 'Allas! your hors goth to the fen
With wylde mares, as fast as he may go;
Unthank come on his heed that band him so,
And he that bettir schuld han knyt the reyne!'
'Allas!' quod Johan, 'Aleyn, for Cristes peyne!
Leg doun thi swerd, and I sal myn alswa;
I is ful wight, God wat, as is a ra;
By Goddes hart! he sal nat scape us bathe.
Why nad thou put the capil in the lathe?
Il hail, Aleyn, by God! thou is a fon!'
This sely clerkes speeden hem anoon
Toward the fen, bothe Aleyn and eek Jon.
And when the myller sawh that they were gon,
He half a busshel of the flour hath take,
And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.
He seyde, 'I trowe the clerkes ben aferd!
Yet can a miller make a clerkes berd,
For al his art; ye, lat hem go here waye!

Lo wher they goon! ye, lat the children playe;
They get hym nat so lightly, by my croun!'
This seely clerkes ronnen up and doun,
With 'Keep! keep! stand! stand! jossa, ware derere!
Ga wightly thou, and I sal keep him heere.'
But schortly, til that it was verray night,
They cowde nat, though they did al here might,
Here capil cacche, it ran away so faste,
Til in a diche they caught him atte laste.
Wery and wete as bestys in the reyn,
Comth sely Johan, and with him comth Aleyn.
'Allas!' quod Johan, that day that I was born!
Now are we dryve til hething and to scorn.
Oure corn is stole, men woln us foles calle,
Bathe the wardeyn and eek our felaws alle,
And namely the myller, weyloway!'
Thus pleyneth Johan, as he goth by the way
Toward the mylle, and Bayard in his hand.
The myller sittyng by the fyr he fand,
For it was night, and forther mighte they noughte,
But for the love of God they him bisoughte
Of herberwh and of ese, as for her peny.
The myller sayd agayn, 'If ther be eny,
Swich as it is, yit schul ye have your part.
Myn hous is streyt, but ye han lerned art;
Ye conne by argumentes make a place
A myl brood of twenty foote of space.
Let se now if this place may suffyse,
Or make it rom with speche, as is your gyse.'
'Now, Symond,' seyde this Johan, 'by seynt Cuthberd?
Ay is thou mery, and that is fair answerd.

I have herd say, men suld take of twa thinges,
Slik as he fynt, or tak slik as he bringes.
But specially I pray the, host ful deere,
Get us som mete and drynk, and mak us cheere,
And we wol paye trewely at the fulle;
With empty hand men may na hawkes tulle.
Lo heer our silver redy for to spende.'
This meller into toun his doughter sende
For ale and breed, and rosted hem a goos,
And band her hors, he scholde no more go loos;
And in his owne chambir hem made a bed,
With schetys and with chalouns fair i-spred,
Nat from his owen bed ten foot or twelve.
His doughter had a bed al by hirselve,
Right in the same chambre by and by;
It mighte be no bet, and cause why
Ther was no rommer herberw in the place.
They sowpen, and they speke hem to solace,
And dronken ever strong ale atte beste.
Aboute mydnyght wente they to reste.
Wel hath the myller vernysshed his heed,
Ful pale he was for-dronken, and nat reed;
He yoxeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose,
As he were on the quakke or on the pose.
To bed he goth, and with him goth his wyf,
As eny jay sche light was and jolyf,
So was *hire* joly whistel wel y-wet;
The cradil at hire beddes feet is set,
To rokken, and to yive the child to souke.
And whan that dronken was al in the crouke,
To bedde wente the doughter right anon;
To bedde goth Aleyn, and also Jon,
Ther nas no more, hem needed no dwale.

This meller hath so wysly bibbed ale,
That as an hors he snortith in his sleep,
Ne of his tayl bihynd took he no keep.
His wyf *bar him* a burdoun, a ful strong,
Men might her rowtyng heeren a forlong.
The wenche routeth eek *par companye*.
Aleyn the clerk, that herde this melodye,
He pokyde Johan, and seyde, 'Slepistow?
Herdistow ever slik a sang er now?
Lo, slik a couplyng is betwix hem alle,
A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!
Wha herkned ever swilk a ferly thing?
Ye, thei sul have the flour of ille endyng!
This lange night ther tydes me na rest.
But yet na fors, al sal be for the best.
For, Johan,' sayd he, 'as ever mot I thryve,
If that I may, yone wenche sal I swyve.
Som esement hath *the* lawe schapen us;
For Johan, ther is a lawe that says thus,
That if a man in a point be agreved,
That in another he sal be releeved.
Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,
And we have had an ylle fitt to day;
And syn I sal have nan amendement
Agayn my los, I wol have esement.
By Goddes sa*ule*! it sal nan other be.'
This Johan answerd, 'Aleyn, avyse the;
The miller is a perlous man,' he sayde,
'And if that he out of his sleep abrayde,
He mighte do us bothe a vilonye.'
Aleyn answerd, 'I count it nat a flye!'
And up he roos, and by the wenche *he* crepte.
This wenche lay upright and faste slepte,

Til he so neih was or sche might aspye
That it had*de* ben to late for to crye.
And schortly for to seye, they weren at oon.
Now pley, Alein, for I wol speke of Jon.
This Johan lith stille a forlong whyle or two,
And to himself compleyned of his woo.
'Allas! quod he, 'this is a wikked jape;
Now may I say that I am but an ape.
Yet hath my felaw somwhat for his harm;
He hath the myllers doughter in his arm;
He auntred him, and has his needes sped,
And I lye as a draf-sak in my bed;
And when this jape is tald another day,
I sal be held a daf, a cokenay.
Unhardy is unsely, as men saith.
I wol arise, and auntre it, in good faith.'
And up he ros, and softely he wente
Unto the cradil, and in his hand it hente,
And bar it softe unto his beddis feet.
Soone after this the wyf hir routyng leet,
And gan awake, and went hir for to pisse,
And cam agayn, and gan hir cradel mysse,
And groped heer and ther, but sche fond noon.
'Allas!' quod sche, 'I had almost mysgoon;
I had almost goon to the clerkes bed,
Ey, *benedicite!* than had I foule i-sped!'
And forth sche goth, til sche the cradil fand.
Sche gropith alway forther with hir hand,
And fand the bed, and thoughte nat but good,
Bycause that the cradil by hit stood,
Nat knowyng wher sche was, for it was derk;
But faire and wel sche creep in to the clerk,
And lith ful stille, and wolde han caught a sleep.

Withinne a while Johan the clerk up leep,
And on this goode wyf *he* leyth on sore;
So mery a fytt ne hadde sche nat ful yore.
He priketh harde and deepe, as he were mad.
This joly lyf han this twey clerkes had,
Til that the thridde cok bygan to synge.
Aleyn wax wery in the dawenynge,
For he hadde swonken al the longe night,
And seyde, 'Farwel, Malyn, my sweete wight!
The day is come, I may no lenger byde;
But evermo, wher so I go or ryde,
I am thin owen clerk, so have I seel!'
'Now, deere lemman,' quod sche, 'go, farwel!
But or thou go, o thing I wol the telle:
Whan that thou wendist hom-ward by the melle,
Right at the entré of the dore byhynde
Thou schalt a cake of half a busshel fynde,
That was i-maked of thyn owen mele,
Which that I hilp myn owen self to stele.
And, goode lemman, God the save and kepe!'
And with that word almost sche gan to weepe.
Aleyn uprist, and thought, 'Er that it dawe
I wol go crepen in by my felawe;'
And fand the cradil with his hand anon.
'By God!' thought he, 'al wrong I have i-goon;
My heed is toty of my swynk to nyght,
That makes me that I ga nought aright.
I wot wel by the cradel I have mysgo;
Heer lith the myller and his wyf also.'
Forth he goth in twenty devel way
Unto the bed, ther as the miller lay.
He wende have crope by his felaw Jon,
And by the myller in he creep anon,

And caught him by the nekke, and soft he spak,
And seyde, 'Jon, thou swyneshed, awak,
For Cristes sowle! and here a noble game;
For, by that lord that cleped is seynt Jame,
As I have thries in this schorte night
Swyved the myllers doughter bolt upright,
Whiles thou hast as a coward ben agast.'
'Ye, false harlot,' quod this mellere, 'hast?
A! false traitour, false clerk!' quod he,
'Thou schalt be deed, by Goddes dignité!
Who durste be so bold to disparage
My doughter, that is com of hih lynage?'
And by the throte-bolle he caught Aleyn,
And he hent him dispitously ageyn,
And on the nose he smot him with his fest.
Doun ran the blody streem upon his brest;
And in the floor with nose and mouth to-broke
They walweden as pigges in a poke;
And up they goon, and doun they goon anon,
Til that the millner stumbled at a ston,
And doun he felle bakward on his wyf,
That wyste nothing of this nyce stryf;
For sche was falle asleepe a litel wight
With Jon the clerk, that waked al the night,
And with the falle right out of slepe sche brayde.
'Help, holy croys of Bromholme!' sche sayde,
'*In manus tuas*, Lord, to the I calle!
Awake, Symond, the feend is in thin halle!
My hert is broken! help! I am but deed!
Ther lythe upon my wombe and on myn heed.
Help, Symkyn! for this false clerkes fighte.'
This Johan stert up as fast as ever he mighte,
And graspede by the walles to and fro,

To fynde a staf; and sche sturt up also.
And knewe the estres bet than dede *that* Jon.
And by the wal sche took a staf anon,
And sawh a litel glymeryng of light:
For at an hool in schon the moone bright.
And by that light she saugh hem bothe two;
But sikirly sche wiste nat who was who.
But as sche saugh a whit thing in hir yë.
And whan sche gan this white thing aspye.
Sche wende the clerk hadde wered a volupeer;
And with a staf sche drough hir neer and neer,
And wend have hit this Aleyn atte fulle,
And smot this meller on the piled sculle,
That doun he goth, and cryeth, 'Harrow! I dye!'
This clerkes beeten him wel, and leet hym lye,
And greyth hem wel, and take her hors anon,
And eek here mele, and hoom anon they goon;
And at the millen dore they tok here cake
Of half a buisshel flour ful wel i-bake.

Thus is the prowde miller wel i-bete,
And hath i-lost the gryndyng of the whete,
And payed for the soper every del
Of Aleyn and of Johan, that beten him wel;
His wyf is swyved, and his doughter als.
Lo! such it is a miller to be fals.
And therto this proverbe is seyd ful soth,
He thar nat weene wel that evyl doth.
A gylour schal himself bygiled be.
And God, that sittest in thy magesté,
Save al this compaignie, gret and smale!
Thus have I quyt the miller in his tale.

THE COKES PROLOGE.

THE Cook of Londone, whil the Reeve spak,
For joye *him* thought he clawed him on the bak;
'Ha, ha!' quod he, 'for Cristes passioun,
This meller hath a scharp conclusioun
Upon his argument of herburgage.
Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,
Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous,
For herburgage by night is perilous.
Wel aught a man avised for to be
Whom that he brought into his pryvyté.
I praye to God so gyf my body care,
Yif ever, siththe I highte Hogge of Ware,
Herd I *a* miller better set a-werke;
He hadde a jape of malice in the derke.
But God forbede that we stynten heere,
And therfore if ye fouchesauf to heere
A tale of me that am a pover man,
I wol yow telle as wel as *eny* kan
A litel jape that fel in oure cité.'
Oure Host answerde and seyde, 'I graunt it the.
Now telle on, Roger, and loke it be good;
For many a pastey hastow lete blood,
And many a Jakk of Dover hastow sold,
That hath be twyes hoot and twyes cold.
Of many a pilgrym hastow Cristes curs;
For thy persly they faren yet the wors,

That they have eten with the stubbil goos ;
For in thy schoppe is many a flye loos.
Now *telle on*, gentil Roger by thy name,
But yit I pray the be nought wroth for game ;
A man may seye ful sothe in game and pley.'
'Thow saist ful soth,' quod Roger, 'by my fey!
But soth play quad play, as the Flemyng saith ;
And therfore, Henry Baillif, by thy faith,
Be thou nat wroth, or we departen her,
Though that my tale be of an hostyler.
But natheles I wol not telle it yit,
But or we departen it schal be quyt.'
And therwithal he lowh and made chere,
And seyde his tale, as ye schal after heere.

THE COKES TALE.

APRENTYS dwellede whilom in oure citee,
And of a craft of vitaillers was he ;
Gaylard he was, as goldfynch in the schawe,
Broun as a bery, and a propre felawe,
With lokkes blak, and kempt ful fetously.
Dauncen he cowde *so* wel and prately,
That he was cleped Perkyn Revellour.
He was *as* ful of love and paramour
As is the honycombe of hony swete ;
Wel were the wenche that mighte him meete.
At every bridale wold he synge and hoppe ;
He lovede bette the taverne than the schoppe.

For whan ther eny rydyng was in Cheepe,
Out of the schoppe thider wolde he lepe;
Tyl *that* he hadde al that sight i-seyn,
And daunced wel, he nolde nat come ageyn;
And gadred him a meyné of his sort,
To hoppe and synge, and make such disport.
And ther they setten stevene for to meete,
To pleyen atte dys in such a strete,
For in the toun ne was ther no prentys
That fairer cowde caste a peyre dys
Than Perkyn couthe, and therto he was free
Of his dispence, in place of pryvyté.
That fand his mayster wel in his chaffare,
For often tyme he fond his box ful bare.
For such a joly prentys revelour,
That haunteth dys, revel, or paramour,
His maister schal it in his schoppe abye,
Al have he no part of the mynstralcye.
For thefte and ryot be convertyble,
Al can they pley on giterne or rubible.
Revel and trouthe, as in a lowe degré,
They ben ful wroth al day, as ye may see.
This joly prentys with his mayster bood,
Til he was oute neygh of his prentyshood,
Al were he snybbyd bothe erly and late,
And som tyme lad with revel into Newgate.
But atte laste his mayster him bythoughte
Upon a day, whan he his papyr soughte,
Of a proverbe, that saith this same word,
Wel bette is roten appul out of hord,
Than that it rote al the remenaunt.
So fareth it by a ryotous servaunt;
It is ful lasse harm to late him pace,

Than he schend al the servauntes in the place.
Therfore his mayster yaf him acquitaunce,
And bad him go, with sorwe and with meschaunce.
And thus the joly prentys had his leve.
Now let hym ryot al the night or leve.
And for there is no thef withouten a louke,
That helpeth him to wasten and to souke
Of that he bribe can, or borwe maye,
Anone he sent his bedde and his araie
Unto a compere of his owen sorte,
That loved dis, and revel, and disporte,
And had a wife, that held for contenaunce
A schoppe, and swyved for hire sustenaunce.
Fye theron, it is so foule, I wil nowe telle no forther,
For schame of the harlotrie that seweth after;
A velany it were thare of more to spelle,
Bot of a knyhte and his sonnes my tale I wil forthe telle.

THE COKES TALE OF GAMELYN.

LITHETH, and lestneth, and herkneth aright,
And ye schul heere a talkyng of a doughty knight;
Sire Johan of Boundys was his right name.
He cowde of norture ynough and mochil of game.
Thre sones the knight had, that with his body he wan;
The eldest was a moche schrewe, and sone he bygan.

His bretheren loved wel here fader, and of him
were agast,
The eldest deserved his fadres curs, and had it at
the last.
The goode knight his fader lyvede so yore,
That deth was comen him to, and handled him
ful sore.
The goode knight cared sore, sik ther he lay,
How his children scholde lyven after his day.
He hadde ben wyde wher, but non housbond he was,
Al the lond that he had, it was verrey purchas.
Fayn he wold it were dressed amonges hem alle,
That ech of hem had his part, as it mighte falle.
Tho sent he into cuntre after wise knightes,
To helpe delen his londes and dressen hem to rightes.
He sent hem word by lettres they schulden hye
blyve,
Yf they wolde speke with him whil he was on lyve.
Tho the knyghtes herden sik ther he lay,
Hadde they no reste nother night ne day,
Til they comen to him ther he lay stille
On his deth bedde, to abyde Goddes wille.
Than seyde the goode knight, syk her he lay,
'Lordes, I you warne for soth, withoute nay,
I may no lengere lyven heer in this stounde;
For thurgh Goddes wille deth draweth me to
grounde.'
Ther nas non of hem alle that herd him aright,
That they hadden reuthe of that ilke knight,
And seyde, 'Sir, for Goddes love, ne dismay you
nought;
God may do bote of bale that is now i-wrought.'
Than spak the goode knight, sik ther he lay,

'Boote of bale God may sende, I wot it is no nay;
But I byseke you, knightes, for the love of me,
Goth and dresseth my lond among my sones thre.
And, sires, for the love of God, deleth hem nat amys,
And forgetith nat Gamelyn, my yonge sone that is.
Taketh heed to that on, as wel as to that other;
Selde ye see ony eyr, helpen his brother.'

Tho leete they the knight lyen that was nought in hele,
And wenten into counseil his londes for to dele;
For to delen hem alle to oon, that was her thought,
And for Gamelyn was yongest, he schuld have nought.
Al the lond that ther was they dalten it in two,
And leeten Gamelyn the yonge withoute lond go,
And ech of hem seyde to other ful lowde,
His bretheren might yeve him lond whan he good cowde.
Whan they hadde deled the lond at here wille,
They come ayein to the knight ther he lay ful stille,
And tolden him anon-right how they hadden wrought;
And the knight there he lay liked it right nought.
Than seyde the knight, '*I swere* by seynt Martyn,
For al that ye have y-doon yit is the lond myn;
For Goddes love, neyhebours, stondeth alle stille,
And I wil dele my lond after my wille.
Johan, myn eldeste sone, shall have plowes fyve,
That was my fadres heritage whil he was on lyve;
And my myddeleste sone fyf plowes of lond,
That I halp for to gete with my right hond;
And al myn other purchas of londes and leedes
That I byquethe Gamelyn, and alle my goode steedes.

And I byseke yow, goode men, that lawe conne of
londe,
For Gamelynes love, that my queste stonde.'
Thus dalte the knight his lond by his day,
Right on his deth bed sik ther he lay;
And sone aftirward he lay stoon stille,
And deyde whan tyme com, as it was Cristes wille.
And anon as he was deed, and under gras i-grave,
Sone the elder brother gyled the yonge knave,
He took into his hond his lond *and* his leede,
And Gamelyn himselfe to clothen and to feede.
He clothed him and fed him yvel and eek wrothe,
And leet his londes for-fare and his houses bothe,
His parkes and his woodes, and dede nothing wel,
And seththen he it abought on his *owne* fel.
So longe was Gamelyn in his brotheres halle,
For the strengest of good wil they doutiden him
alle;
Ther was non therinne nowther yong ne olde
That wolde wraththe Gamelyn, were he never so
bolde.
Gamelyn stood on a day in his brotheres yerde,
And bygan with his hond to handlen his berde;
He thought on his londes that layen unsawe,
And his faire okes that doun were i-drawe;
His parkes were i-broken, and his deer byreeved;
Of alle his goode steedes noon was him byleved;
His howses were unhiled and ful yvel dight.
Tho thoughte Gamelyn it wente nought aright.
Afterward cam his brother walkynge thare,
And seyde to Gamelyn, 'Is our mete yare?'
Tho wraththed him Gamelyn, and swor by Goddes
book,

'Thou shalt go bake thiself, I wil nought be thy cook.'
'How? brother Gamelyn, how answerest thou now?
Thou spake never such a word as thou dost now.'
'By my faith,' seyde Gamelyn, 'now me thinketh neede,
Of alle the harmes that I have I tok never ar heede.
My parkes ben to-broken, and my deer byreved,
Of myn armure and my steedes nought is me bileved;
Al that my fader me byquath al goth to schame,
And therfor have thou Goddes curs, brother, by thy name.'
Than byspak his brother, that rape was of rees,
'Stond stille, gadelyng, and hold right thy pees;
Thow schalt be fayn for to have thy mete and thy wede;
What spekest thou, Gamelyn, of lond other of leede?
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, the child that was ying,
'Cristes curs mot he have that clepeth me gadelyng!
I am no worse gadelyng, ne no worse wight,
But born of a lady, and geten of a knight.'
Ne durst he nat to Gamelyn ner a foote go,
But clepide to him his men, and seyde to hem tho,
'Goth and beteth this boy, and reveth him his wyt,
And lat him leren another tyme to answere me bet.'
Thanne seyde the child, yonge Gamelyn,
'Cristes curs mot thou have, brother art thou myn;
And if I schal algate be beten anon,
Cristes curs mot thou have, but thou be that oon.'
And anon his brother in that grete hete
Made his men to fette staves Gamelyn to bete.
Whan that everich of hem a staf had i-nome,

Gamelyn was war anon tho he seigh hem come;
Tho Gamelyn seyh hem come, he loked over al,
And was war of a pestel stood under a wal;
Gamelyn was light of foot and thider gan he lepe,
And drof alle his brotheres men right on an hepe.
He loked as a wilde lyoun, and leyde on good woon;
Tho his brother say that, he bigan to goon;
He fley up intil a loft, and schette the dore fast.
Thus Gamelyn with the pestel made hem alle agast.
Some for Gamelynes love and some for his eyghe,
Alle they drowe by halves, tho he gan to pleyghe.
'What! how now?' seyde Gamelyn, 'evel mot ye thee!
Wil ye bygynne contek, and so sone flee?'
Gamelyn sought his brother, whider he was flowe,
And saugh wher he loked out at a wyndowe.
'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'com a litel ner,
And I wil teche the a play atte bokeler.'
His brother him answerde, and swor by seynt Rycher,
'Whil the pestel is in thin hond, I wil come no neer:
Brother, I wil make thy pees, I swere by Cristes ore;
Cast away the pestel, and wraththe the nomore.'
'I mot neede,' sayde Gamelyn, 'wraththe me at oones,
For thou wolde make thy men to breke myne boones,
Ne had I hadde mayn and might in myn armes
To have i-put hem fro me, *they* wolde have do me harmes.'
'Gamelyn,' sayde his brother, 'be thou nought wroth,
For to seen the have harm it were me right loth;

I ne dide it nought, brother, but for a fondyng,
For to loken or thou were strong and art so ying.'
'Com adoun than to me, and graunte me my bone,
Of thing I wil the aske, and we schul saughte sone.'
Doun than cam his brother, that fykil was and felle,
And was swithe sore agast of the pestelle.
He seyde, 'Brother Gamelyn, aske me thy boone,
And loke thou me blame but I graunte sone.'
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, 'Brother, i-wys,
And we schulle ben at oon, thou most me graunte this,
Al that my fader me byqnath whil he was on lyve,
Thou most do me it have, yif we schul nat stryve.'
'That schalt thou have, Gamelyn, I swere by Cristes ore!
Al that thi fader the byquath, though thou woldest have more;
Thy lond, that lyth laye, ful wel it schal be sowe,
And thyn howses reysed up, that ben leyd so lowe.'
Thus seyde the knight to Gamelyn with mowthe,
And thought eek of falsnes, as he wel couthe.
The knight thought on tresoun, and Gamelyn on noon,
And went and kist his brother, and than they were at oon.
Allas! yonge Gamelyn, nothing he ne wiste
With which a false tresoun his brother him kiste.
Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth your tonge,
And ye schul heere talkyng of Gamelyn the yonge,
Ther was ther bysiden cryed a wrastlyng,
And therfor ther was sette up a ram and a ryng;
And Gamelyn was in good wil to wende therto,

For to preven his might what he cowthe do.
'Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'by seynt Richer,
Thou most lene me to nyght a litel courser
That is freisch to the spore, on for to ryde;
I most on an erande, a litel her byside.'
'By God!' seyd his brother, 'of steedes in my stalle
Go and chese the the best, and spare non of alle,
Of steedes or of coursers that stonden hem bisyde;
And tel me, goode brother, whider thou wolt ryde.'
'Her byside, brother, is cryed a wrastlyng,
And therfor schal be set up a ram and a ryng;
Moche worschip it were, brother, to us alle,
Might I the ram and the ryng bryng home to this halle.'
A steede ther was sadeled smertely and skeet;
Gamelyn did a paire spores fast on his feet,
He set his foot in the styrop, the steede he bystrood,
And toward the wrastelyng the yonge child rood.
Tho Gamelyn the yonge was ride out at the gate,
The fals knight his brother lokked it after thate,
And bysoughte Jhesu Crist, that is heven kyng,
He mighte breke his nekke in that wrastlyng.
As sone as Gamelyn com ther the place was,
He lighte doun of his steede, and stood on the gras,
And ther he herd a frankeleyn wayloway synge,
And bigan bitterly his hondes for to wrynge.
'Goode man,' seyde Gamelyn, 'why makest ow this fare?
Is ther no man that may you helpe out of this care?'
'Allas!' seyde this frankleyn, 'that ever was I bore!
For tweye stalworthe sones I wene that I have lore;
A champioun is in the place, that hath i-wrought me sorwe,

For he hath slayn my two sones, but if God hem borwe.
I wold yeve ten pound, by Jhesu Crist! and more,
With the nones I fand a man to handil him sore.'
'Goode man,' seyde Gamelyn, 'wilt thou wel doon,
Hold myn hors, whil my man draweth of my schoon,
And help my man to kepe my clothes and my steede,
And I wil into place go, to loke if I may speede.'
'By God!' sayde the frankeleyn, 'anon it schal be doon;
I wil myself be thy man, to drawen of thy schoon,
And wende thou into the place, Jhesu Crist the speede!
And drede not of thy clothes, nor of thy goode steede.'
Barfoot and ungert Gamelyn in eam,
Alle that weren in the place heede of him they name,
How he durst auntre him of him to doon his might
That was so doughty champioun in wrastlyng and in fight.
Up sterte the champioun raply and anoon,
Toward yonge Gamelyn he bigan to goon,
And sayde, 'Who is thy fader and who is thy sire?
For-sothe thou art a gret fool, that thou come hire.'
Gamelyn answerde the champioun tho,
'Thou knewe wel my fader whil he couthe go,
Whiles he was on lyve, by seint Martyn!
Sir Johan of Boundys was his name, and I Gamelyn.'
'Felaw,' seyde the champioun, 'al so mot I thryve,
I knew wel thy fader, whil he was on lyve;
And thiself, Gamelyn, I wil that thou it heere,
Whil thou were a yong boy a moche schrewe thou were.'

Than seyde Gamelyn, and swor by Cristes ore,
'Now I am older woxe, thou schalt me fynd a more.'
'By God!' sayde the champioun, 'welcome mote thou be!
Come thou ones in myn hond, schalt thou never the.'
It was wel withinne the night, and the moone schon,
Whan Gamelyn and the champioun togider gon to goon.
The champioun caste tornes to Gamelyn that was prest,
And Gamelyn stood stille, and bad him doon his best.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn to the champioun,
'Thou art fast aboute to brynge me adoun;
Now I have i-proved many tornes of thyne,
Thow most,' he seyde, 'proven on or tuo of myne.'
Gamelyn to the champioun yede smartly anon,
Of alle the tornes that he cowthe he schewed him but oon,
And kast him on the left syde, that thre ribbes to-brake,
And therto his oon arm, that yaf a gret crake.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn smertly anoon,
'Schal it be holde for a cast, or elles for noon?'
'By God,' seyd the champioun, 'whether that it bee,
He that comes ones in thin hand schal he never thee!'
Than seyde the frankeleyn, that had his sones there,
'Blessed be thou, Gamelyn, that ever thou bore were!'

The frankleyn seyd to the champioun. of him stood him noon eye,
'This is yonge Gamelyn that taughte the this pleye,'
Ayein answerd the champioun, that liked nothing welle,
'He is a lither mayster, and his pley is right felle;
Sith I wrastled first, it is i-go ful yore.
But I was nevere my lyf handled so sore.'
Gamelyn stood in the place allone withoute serke,
And seyd, 'If there be eny mo, lat hem come to werke;
The champioun that peyned him to werke so sore,
It seemeth by his continuance that he wil nomore.'
Gamelyn in the place stood as stille as stoon,
For to abyde wrastelyng, but there com noon;
Ther was noon with Gamelyn wolde wrastle more,
For he handled the champioun so wonderly sore.
Two gentilmen ther were that yemede the place,
Comen to Gamelyn, God give him goode grace!
And sayde to him, 'Do on thyn hosen and thy schoon,
For-sothe at this tyme this feire is i-doon.'
And than seyde Gamelyn, 'So mot I wel fare,
I have nought yet halvendel sold up my ware.'
Tho seyde the champioun, 'So brouk I my sweere,
He is a fool that thereof beyeth, thou selleth it so deere.'
Tho sayde the frankeleyn that was in moche care,
'Felaw,' he seyde, 'why lakkest thou his ware?
By seynt Jame in Galys, that many man hath sought,
Yet it is to good cheep that thou hast i-bought.'
Tho that wardeynes were of that wrastlyng,

Come and broughte Gamelyn the ram and the ryng,
And seyden, 'Have, Gamelyn, the ryng and the ram
For the best wrasteler that ever here cam.'
Thus wan Gamelyn the ram and the ryng,
And wente with moche joye home in the mornyng.
His brother seih wher he cam with the grete rowte,
And bad schitte the gate, and holde him withoute,
The porter of his lord was ful sore agast,
And stert anon to the gate, and lokked it fast.
Now litheth, and lestneth, bothe yong and olde,
And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the bolde.
Gamelyn come therto for to have comen in,
And thanne was it i-schet faste with a pyn;
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Porter, undo the yate,
For many good mannes sone stondeth therate.'
Than answerd the porter, and swor by Goddes berde,
'Thow ne schalt, Gamelyn come into this yerde.'
'Thow lixt,' sayde Gamelyn, 'so browke I my chyn!'
He smot the wyket with his foot, and brak awey the pyn.
The porter seyh tho it might no better be,
He sette foot on erthe, *and* he bigan to flee.
'By my faith,' seyde Gamelyn, 'that travail is i-lore,
For I am of foot as light as thou, though thow haddest swore.'
Gamelyn overtook the porter, and his teene wrak,
And gert him in the nekke, that the bon to-brak,
And took him by that oon arm, and threw him in a welle,
Seven fadmen it was deep, as I have herd telle.
Whan Gamelyn the yonge thus hadde pleyed his play,

Alle that in the yerde were drewen hem away;
They dredden him ful sore, for werkes that he wroughte,
And for the faire company that he thider broughte.
Gamelyn yede to the gate, and leet it up wyde;
He leet in alle maner men that gon in wold or ryde,
And seyde, 'Ye be welcome withouten eny greeve,
For we wiln be maistres heer, and aske no man leve.
Yestirday I lefte,' seyde yonge Gamelyn,
'In my brother seller fyve tonne of wyn:
I wil not that this compaignye parten a-twynne,
And ye wil doon after me, while eny sope is thrynne;
And if my brother grucche, or make foul cheere,
Other for spense of mete or drynk that we spenden heere,
I am oure catour, and bere oure aller purs,
He schal have for his gruechyng seint Maries eurs.
My brother is a nyggoun, I swer by Cristes ore,
And we wil spende largely that he hath spared yore;
And who that maketh gruechyng that we here dwelle,
He schal to the porter into the draw-welle.'
Seven dayes and seven nyght Gamelyn held his feste,
With moche myrth and solas that was ther and no cheste;
In a litel toret his brother lay i-steke,
And sey hem wasten his good, but durst he not speke.
Erly on a mornyng on the eighte day
The gestes come to Gamelyn and wolde gon here way.

'Lordes,' seyde Gamelyn, 'wil ye so hye?
Al the wyn is not yet y-dronke, so brouk I myn ye.'
Gamelyn in his herte was he ful wo,
Whan his gestes took her leve from him for to go;
He wold they had lenger abide, and they seyde nay,
But bitaughte Gamelyn God, and good day.
Thus made Gamelyn his fest, and brought it wel to ende,
And after his gestys took leve to wende.
Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth youre tonge,
And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the yonge;
Herkneth, lordynges, and lesteneth aright,
Whan alle the gestes were goon how Gamelyn was dight.
Al the whil that Gamelyn heeld his mangerye,
His brother thought on him be wreke with his treccherie.
Tho Gamelyns gestes were riden and i-goon,
Gamelyn stood allone, frendes had he noon;
Tho after ful soone withinne a litel stounde,
Gamelyn was i-take and ful hard i-bounde.
Forth com the fals knight out of the selleer,
To Gamelyn his brother he yede ful neer,
And sayde to Gamelyn, 'Who made the so bold
For to stroye my stoor of myn houshold?'
'Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'wraththe the right nought,
For it is many day i-gon siththen it was bought;
For, brother, thou hast i-had, by seynt Richer,
Of fiftene plowes of lond this sixtene yer,
And of alle the beestes thou hast forth bred,
That my fader me biquath on his deth bed;
Of al this sixtene yeer I yeve the the prow

For the mete and the drynk that we have spended now.'
Thanne seyde the fals knyght, evel mot he the,
'Herkne, brother Gamelyn, what I wol yeve the;
For of my body, brother, geten heir have I noon,
I wil make the myn heir, I swere by seint Johan.'
'*Par ma foy!*' sayde Gamelyn, 'and if it so be,
And thou thenke as thou seyst, God yelde it the!'
Nothing wiste Gamelyn of his brotheres gyle;
Therfore he him bigyled in a litel while.
'Gamelyn,' seyde he, 'o thing I the telle;
Tho thou threwe my porter in the draw-welle,
I swor in that wraththe, and in that grete moot,
That thou schuldest be bounde bothe hand and foot;
Therfore I the biseche, brother Gamelyn,
Lat me nought be forsworn, as brother art thou myn;
Lat me bynde the now bothe hand and feet,
For to holde myn avow, as I the biheet.'
'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'al-so mot I the!
Thou schalt not be forsworen for the love of me.'
Tho made they Gamelyn to sitte, might he nat stonde,
Til they had him bounde bothe foot and honde.
The fals knight his brother of Gamelyn was agast,
And sent aftir feteres to feteren him fast.
His brother made lesynges on him ther he stood,
And told hem that comen in that Gamelyn was wood.
Gamelyn stood to a post bounden in the halle,
Tho that comen in ther loked on him alle.
Ever stood Gamelyn even upright;
But mete ne drynk had ne non, neither day ne night.

Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Brother, by myn hals,
Now I have aspied thou art a party fals;
Had I wist that tresoun that thou haddest y-founde,
I wolde have yeve the strokes or I had be bounde!'
Gamelyn stood bounden stille as eny stoon;
Two dayes and two nightes mete had he noon.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, that stood y-bounde stronge,
'Adam spencer, me thinkth I faste to longe;
Adam spencer, now I byseche the,
For the mochel love my fader loved the,
Yf thou may come to the keyes, lese me out of bond,
And I wil parte with the of my free lond.'
Thanne seyde Adam, that was the spencer,
'I have served thy brother this sixtene yeer.
If I leete the goon out of this bour,
He wolde say afterward I were a traytour.'
'Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'so brouk I myn hals!
Thou schalt fynde my brother atte laste fals;
Therfor, brother Adam, louse me out of bond,
And I wil parte with the of my free lond.'
'Up swich a forward,' seyde Adam, 'i-wys,
I wil do therto al that in me is.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'al-so mot I the,
I wol holde the covenant, and thou wil me.'
Anon as Adames lord to bedde was i-goon,
Adam took the keyes, and leet Gamelyn out anoon;
He unlokked Gamelyn bothe hand and feet,
In hope of avauncement that he him byheet.
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Thanked be Goddes sonde!
Now I am loosed bothe foot and honde;
Had I now eten and dronken aright,
The is noon in this hous schuld bynde me this night.'

Adam took Gamelyn, as stille as ony stoon,
And ladde him into spence rapely and anon,
And sette him to soper right in a privé stede,
And bad him do gladly, and Gamelyn so dede.
Anon as Gamelyn hadde eten wel and fyn,
And therto y-dronke wel of the rede wyn,
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'what is now thy reed?
Wher I go to my brother and girde of his heed?
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'it schal not be so.
I can teche the a reed that is worth the two.
I wot wel for-sothe that this is no nay.
We schul have a mangery right on Sonday;
Abbotes and priours many heer schal be,
And other men of holy chirche, as I telle the;
Thow schalt stonde up by the post as thou were hond-faste,
And I schal leve hem unloke, awey thou may hem caste,
Whan that they have eten and waisschen here hondes,
Thou schalt biseke hem alle to brynge the out of bondes;
And if they wille borwe the, that were good game,
Then were thou out of prisoun, and I out of blame;
And if everich of hem say unto us nay,
I schal do another thing, I swere by this day!
Thou schalt have a good staf and I wil have another,
And Cristes curs have that oon that faileth that other!'
'Ye, for Gode!' sayde Gamelyn, 'I say it for me,
If I fayle on my syde, yvel mot I the!
If we schul algate assoile hem of here synne,
Warne me, brother Adam, whan I schal bygynne.'

'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'by seynte Charité,
I wil warne the byforn whan that it schal be;
Whan I twynk on the, loke for to goon,
And cast awey the feteres, and com to me anoon.'
'Adam,' seide Gamelyn, 'blessed be thy bones!
That is a good counseil yevyng for the nones;
If they werne me thanne to brynge me out of bendes,
I wol sette goode strokes right on here lendes.'
Tho the Sonday was i-come, and folk to the feste,
Faire they were welcomed bothe lest and meste;
And ever as they atte halle dore comen in,
They caste their eye on yonge Gamelyn.
The fals knight his brother, ful of trechery,
Alle the gestes that ther wer atte mangery,
Of Gamelyn his brother he tolde hem with mouthe
Al the harm and the schame that he telle couthe.
Tho they were served of messes tuo or thre,
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'How serve ye me?
'It is nought wel served, by God that al made!
That I sytte fastyng, and other men make glade.'
The fals knight his brother, ther that he stood,
Tolde alle his gestes that Gamelyn was wood;
And Gamelyn stood stille, and answerde nought,
But Adames wordes he held in his thought.
Tho Gamelyn gan speke dolfully withalle
To the gret lordes that saten in the halle:
'Lordes,' he seyde, 'for Cristes passioun,
Helpeth brynge Gamelyn out of prisoun.'
Than seyde an abbot, sorwe on his cheeke!
'He schal have Cristes curs and seynte Maries eeke,
That the out of prisoun beggeth other borwe,
But ever worthe hem wel that doth the moche sorwe.'

After that abbot than spak another,
'I wold thin heed were of, though thou were my brother!
Alle that the borwe, foule mot hem falle!'
Thus they seyde alle that were in the halle.
Than seyde a priour, yvel mot he thryve!
'It is moche skathe, boy, that thou art on lyve,'
'Ow,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so brouk I my bon?
Now I have aspyed that freendes have I non.
Cursed mot he worthe bothe fleisch and blood,
That ever do priour or abbot ony good!'
Adam the spencer took up the cloth,
And loked on Gamelyn, and say that he was wroth;
Adam on the pantrye litel he thought,
But tuo goode staves to halle dore he brought.
Adam loked on Gamelyn, and he was war anoon,
And caste awey the feteres, and he bigan to goon:
Tho he com to Adam, he took that oo staf,
And bygan to worche, and goode strokes yaf.
Gamelyn cam into the halle, and the spencer bothe,
And loked hem aboute, as they had be wrothe;
Gamelyn sprengeth holy-water with an oken spire,
That some that stoode upright fel in the fire.
Ther was no lewede man that in the halle stood,
That wolde do Gamelyn eny thing but good,
But stood besyde, and leet hem bothe werche,
For they hadde no rewthe of men of holy cherche:
Abbot or priour, monk or chanoun,
That Gamelyn overtok, anon they yeeden doun.
Ther was non of hem alle that with his staf mette,
That he made him overthrowe and quyt him his dette.
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'for seynte Charité,

Pay large lyverey, for the love of me,
And I wil kepe the dore, so ever here I masse!
Er they ben assoyled ther shal noon passe.'
'Dowt the nought,' seyde Gamelyn, 'whil we ben in feere,
Kep thou wel the dore, and I wol werche heere;
Stere the, good Adam, and lat ther noon flee,
And we schul telle largely how many ther be.'
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'do hem but good;
They ben men of holy chirche, draw of hem no blood,
Save wel the croune, and do hem non harmes,
But brek bothe her legges and siththen here armes.'
Thus Gamelyn and Adam wroughte right fast,
And pleyden with the monkes, and made hem agast.
Thider they come rydyng jolily with swaynes,
But hom ayen they were i-lad in cartes and in waynes.
Tho they hadden al y-don, than seyde a gray frere,
'Allas! sire abbot, what did we now heere?
Tho that comen hider, it was a cold reed,
Us hadde ben better at home with water and breed.'
Whil Gamelyn made ordres of monkes and frere.
Ever stood his brother, and made foul chere;
Gamelyn up with his staff, that he wel knew,
And gert him in the nekke, that he overthrew:
A litel above the girdel the rigge-bon to-barst,
And sette him in the feteres ther he sat arst.
'Sitte ther, brother,' sayde Gamelyn,
'For to colyn thy blood, as I dide myn.'
As swithe as they hadde i-wroken hem on here foon,
They asketen watir and waisschen anoon

What some for here love and some for awe,
Alle the servantz served hem of the beste lawe.
The scherreve was thennes but a fyve myle,
And al was y-told him in a litel while,
How Gamelyn and Adam had doon a sory rees,
Bounden and i-wounded men ayein the kinges pees;
Tho bigan some strif for to wake,
And the scherref aboute *caste* Gamelyn for to take.
Now lytheth and lestneth, so God yif you goode fyn!
And ye schul heere good game of yonge Gamelyn.
Four and twenty yonge men, that heelden hem ful bolde,
Come to the schirref and seyde that they wolde
Gamelyn and Adam fetten away.
The scherref yaf hem leve, soth as I you say;
They hyeden faste, wold they nought bylynne,
Til they come to the yate, ther Gamelyn was inne.
They knokked on the gate, the porter was ny,
And loked out at an hol, as man that was sly.
The porter hadde byholde hem a litel while,
He loved wel Gamelyn, and was adrad of gyle,
And leet the wyket stonden ysteke ful stylle
And asked hem withoute what was here wille.
For al the grete company thanne spak but oon,
'Undo the gate, porter, and lat us in goon.'
Than seyde the porter, 'So brouke I my chyn,
Ye schul sey your erand er ye comen in.'
'Sey to Gamelyn and Adam, if here wille be,
We wil speke with hem wordes two or thre.'
'Felawe,' seyde the porter, 'stond there stille,
And I wil wende to Gamelyn to witen his wille.'
In went the porter to Gamelyn anoon,
And seyde, 'Sir, I warne you her ben come your foon.

The scherreves meyne ben atte gate,
For to take you bothe, schul ye nat skape.'
'Porter,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so moot I wel the!
I wil allowe the thy wordes whan I my tyme se;
Go agayn to the yate, and dwel with hem a while,
And thou schalt se right sone, porter, a gyle.
Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'looke the to goon;
We have foomen atte gate, and frendes never oon;
It ben the schirrefes men, that hider ben i-come,
They ben swore to-gidere that we schul be nome.
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'hye the right blyve,
And if I faile the this day, evel mot I thryve!
And we schul so welcome the scherreves men,
That some of hem schul make here beddes in the den.'
Atte posterne gate Gamelyn out wente,
And a good cart staf in his hand he hente;
Adam hente sone another gret staf,
For to helpe Gamelyn, and goode strokes yaf.
Adam felde tweyne, and Gamelyn felde thre,
The other setten feet on erthe, and bygonne fle.
'What?' seyde Adam, 'so ever here I masse!
I have a draught of good wyn, drynk er ye passe.'
'Nay, by God!' sayde they, 'thy drynk is not good,
It wolde make mannes brayn to lien in his hood.'
Gamelyn stood stille, and loked him aboute,
And seih the scherreve come with a gret route.
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'what be now thy reedes?
Here comth the scherreve and wil have oure heedes.
Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'my reed is now this,
Abide we no lenger, lest we fare amys:
I rede that we to wode goon ar that we be founde,
Better is us ther loos than in town y-bounde.'
Adam took by the hond yonge Gamelyn;

And everich of hem tuo drank a draught of wyn,
And after took her coursers and wenten her way.
Tho fond the scherreve nest, but non ay.
The scherreve lighte adoun, and went into the halle,
And fond the lord y-fetered faste withalle.
The scherreve unfetered him sone, and that anoon,
And sent after a leche to hele his rigge-boon.

Lete we now this fals knight lyen in his care,
And talke we of Gamelyn, and loke how he fare.
Gamelyn into the woode stalkede stille,
And Adam the spenser liked ful ylle;
Adam swor to Gamelyn, by seynt Richer,
'Now I see it is mery to be a spencer,
That lever me were keyes for to bere,
Than walken in this wilde woode my clothes to tere.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'dismaye the right nought;
Many good mannes child in care is i-brought.'
And as they stoode talkyng bothen in feere,
Adam herd talkyng of men, and ney him thought thei were.
Tho Gamelyn under the woode loked aright,
Sevene score of yonge men he saugh wel adight;
Alle satte atte mete *in* compas aboute.
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'now have we no doute,
After bale cometh boote, thurgh grace of God almight;
Me thynketh of mete and of drynk that I have a sight.'
Adam lokede tho under woode bowgh,
And whan he seyh mete he was glad ynough;
For he hopede to God for to have his deel,
And he was sore alonged after a good meel.
As he seyde that worde, the mayster outlawe

Saugh Gamelyn and Adam under woode schawe.
'Yonge men,' seyde the maister, 'by the goode roode,
I am war of gestes, God send us non but goode;
Yonder ben tuo yonge men, wonder wel adight,
And paraventure ther ben mo, who-so loked aright.
Ariseth up, ye yonge men, and fetteth hem to me;
It is good that we witen what men they bee.'
Up ther sterten sevene fro the dyner,
And metten with Gamelyn and Adam spenser.
Whan they were neyh hem, than seyde that oon,
'Yeldeth up, yonge men, your bowes and your floon.'
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, than yong was of elde,
'Moche sorwe mot he have that to you hem yelde!
I curse non other, but right myselve,
They ye fette to yow fyve, thanne ye be twelve.'
Tho they herde by his word that might was in his arm,
Ther was none of hem alle that wolde do him harm,
But sayd unto Gamelyn, myldely and stille,
'Com afore our maister, and sey to him thy wille.'
'Yonge men,' sayde Gamelyn, 'by your lewté,
What man is your maister that ye with be!'
Alle they answerde withoute lesyng,
'Oure maister is i-crouned of outlawes kyng.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'go we in Cristes name;
He may neyther mete nor drynk werne us for schame.
If that he be heende, and come of gentil blood,
He wol yeve us mete and drynk, and doon us som good.'
'By seynt Jame!' seyd Adam, 'what harm that I gete,
I wil auntre to the dore that I hadde mete.'

Gamelyn and Adam wente forth in feere,
And they grette the maister that they founde there.
Than seide the maister, kyng of outlawes,
'What seeke ye, yonge men, under woode schawes?'
Gamelyn answerde the kyng with his croune,
'He moste needes walke in woode, that may not walke in towne.
Sire, we walke not heer noon harm for to do,
But if we meete with a deer, to scheete therto,
As men that ben hungry, and mow no mete fynde,
And ben harde bystad under woode lynde.'
Of Gamelynes wordes the maister hadde routhe,
And seyde, 'Ye schal have ynough, have God my trouthe,'
He bad hem sitte ther adoun, for to take reste;
And bad hem ete and drynke, and that of the beste.
As they sete and eeten and dronke wel and fyn,
Than seyd that oon to that other, 'This is Gamelyn.'
Tho was the maister outlawe into counseil nome,
And told how it was Gamelyn that thider was i-come.
Anon as he herde how it was bifalle,
He made him maister under him over hem alle.
Within the thridde wyke him com tydyng,
To the maister outlawe that tho was her kyng,
That he schulde come hom, his pees was i-made;
And of that goode tydyng he was tho ful glad.
Tho seyde he to his yonge men, soth for to telle,
'Me ben comen tydynges I may no lenger dwelle.'
Tho was Gamelyn anon, withoute taryyng,
Made maister outlawe, and crouned her kyng.
Tho was Gamelyn crouned kyng of outlawes,

And walked a while under woode schawes.
The fals knight his brother was scherreve and sire,
And leet his brother endite for hate and for ire.
Tho were his bonde-men sory and nothing glade,
Whan Gamelyn her lord wolves-heed was cryed and made;
And sente out of his men wher they might him fynde,
For to seke Gamelyn under woode lynde,
To telle him tydynges how the wynd was went,
And al his good reved, and his men schent.
Whan they had him founde, on knees they hem sette,
And adoun with here hood, and here lord grette:
'Sire, wraththe you nought, for the goode roode,
For we have brought you tydynges, but they be nat goode.
Now is thy brother scherreve, and hath the baillye,
And he hath endited the, and wolves-heed doth the crie.'
'Allas!' seyde Gamelyn, 'that ever I was so slak
That I ne hadde broke his nekke, tho his rigge brak!
Goth, greteth hem wel, myn housbondes and wyf,
I wol ben atte nexte schire, have God my lyf.'
Gamelyn came wel redy to the nexte schire,
And ther was his brother bothe lord and sire.
Gamelyn com boldelych into the moot halle,
And put adoun his hood among the lordes alle:
'God save you alle, lordynges, that now here be!
But broke-bak scherreve, evel mot thou the!
Why hast thou do me that schame and vilonye,
For to late endite me, and wolves-heed me crye?'
Tho thought the fals knight for to ben awreke,
And leet take Gamelyn, most he nomore speke;
Might ther be nomore grace, but Gamelyn atte last

Was cast into prisoun and fetered ful fast.
Gamelyn hath a brother that highte sir Ote,
As good a knight and heende as mighte gon on foote.
Anon ther yede a messager to that goode knight,
And tolde him altogidere how Gamelyn was dight.
Anon as sire Ote herde how Gamelyn was adight,
He was wonder sory, was he nothing light,
And leet sadle a steede, and the way he nam,
And to his tweyne bretheren anon right he cam.
'Sire,' seyde sire Ote to the scherreve tho,
'We ben but thre bretheren, schul we never be mo,
And thou hast y-prisoned the best of us alle;
Swich another brother yvel mot him bifalle!'
'Sire Ote,' seide the fals knight, 'lat be thi curs;
By God, for thy wordes he schal fare the wurs;
To the kynges prisoun anon he is y-nome,
And ther he schal abyde til the justice come.'
'Parde!' seyde sir Ote, 'better it schal be,
I bidde him to mayinpris, that thou graunt him me,
Til the nexte sittyng of delyveraunce,
And thanne lat Gamelyn stande to his chaunce.'
'Brother, in swich a forthward I take him to the;
And by thi fader soule, that the bygat and me,
But-if he be redy whan the justice sitte,
Thou schalt bere the juggement for al thi grete witte.'
'I graunte wel,' seide sir Ote, 'that it so be.
Let delyver him anon, and tak him to me.'
Tho was Gamelyn delyvered to sire Ote his brother;
And that night dwelleden that on with that other.
On the morn seyde Gamelyn to sir Ote the heende,
'Brother,' he seide, 'I moot for sothe from the wende,

To loke how my yonge men leden here lyf.
Whether they lyven in joie or elles in stryf.'
'Be God!' seyde sire Ote, 'that is a cold reed,
Now I see that al the cark schall fallen on myn heed;
For whan the justice sitte, and thou be nought i-founde,
I schal anon be take, and in thy stede i-bounde.'
'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'dismaye the nought,
For by seint Jame in Gales, that many man hath sought,
If that God almighty hold my lyf and witt,
I wil be ther redy whan the justice sitt.'
Than seide sir Ote to Gamelyn, 'God schilde the fro schame;
Com whan thou seest tyme, and bring us out of blame.'
Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth you stille,
And ye schul here how Gamelyn had al his wille.
Gamelyn wente ayein under woode rys,
And fond there pleying yonge men of prys.
Tho was yonge Gamelyn glad and blithe ynough,
Whan he fond his mery men under woode bough.
Gamelyn and his men talked in feere,
And they hadde good game here maister to heere;
They tolden him of aventures that they hadde founde,
And Gamelyn hem tolde ayein how he was fast i-bounde.
Whil Gamelyn was outlawed, had he no cors;
There was no man that for him ferde the wors,
But abbotes and priours, monk and chanoun;
On hem left he nothing whan he might hem nome.
Whil Gamelyn and his men made merthes ryve,

The fals knight his brother, yvel mot he thryve!
For he was fast about bothe day and other,
For to hyre the quest, to hangen his brother.
Gamelyn stood on a day, and as he biheeld
The woodes and the schawes in the wilde feeld,
He thought on his brother how he him beheet
That he wolde be redy whan the justice seet;
He thoughte wel that he wolde, withoute delay,
Come afore the justice to kepen his day,
And seide to his yonge men, 'Dighteth you yare,
For whan the justice sitt, we moote be thare,
For I am under borwe til that I come,
And my brother for me to prisoun schal be nome.'
'By seint Jame!' seyde his yonge men, 'and thou rede therto,
Ordeyne how it schal be, and it schal be do.'
Whil Gamelyn was comyng ther the justice sat,
The fals knight his brother, foryat he nat that,
To huyre the men on his quest to hangen his brother;
Though he hadde nought that oon, he wolde have that other.
Tho cam Gamelyn fro under woode rys,
And broughte with him his yonge men of prys.
'I se wel,' seyde Gamelyn, 'the justice is sette;
Go aforn, Adam, and loke how it spette.'
Adam went into the halle, and loked al aboute,
He seyh there stonde lordes gret and stoute,
And sir Ote his brother fetered wel fast:
Tho went Adam out of halle, as he were agast.
Adam said to Gamelyn and to his felaws alle,
'Sir Ote stant i-fetered in the moot halle.'
'Yonge men,' seide Gamelyn, 'this ye heeren alle;
Sire Ote stant i-fetered in the moot halle.

If God yif us grace wel for to doo,
He schal it abegge that broughte *him* thertoo.'
Thanne sayde Adam, that lokkes hadde hore,
'Cristes curs most he have that him bond so sore!
And thou wilt, Gamelyn, do after my red,
Ther is noon in the halle schal bere away his heed.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'we wilne nought don so,
We wil slee the giltyf, and lat the other go.
I wil into the halle, and with the justice speke;
On hem that ben gultyf I wil ben awreke.
Lat non skape at the dore; take, yonge men, yeme;
For I wil be justice this day domes to deme.
God spede me this day at my newe werk!
Adam, com on with me, for thou schalt be my clerk.'
His men answereden him and bade him doon his best,
'And if thou to us have neede, thou schalt fynde us prest;
We wiln stande with the, whil that we may dure,
And but we werke manly, pay us non hure.'
'Yonge men,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so mot I wel the!
As trusty a maister ye schal fynde of me.'
Right there the justice sat in the halle,
In wente Gamelyn amonges hem alle.

Gamelyn leet unfetere his brother out of beende.
Thanne seyde sir Ote, his brother that was heende,
'Thou haddest almost, Gamelyn, dwelled to longe,
For the quest is oute on me, that I schulde honge.'
'Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so God yif me good rest!
This day they schuln ben hanged that ben on thy quest;
And the justice bothe that is jugges man,
And the scherreve bothe, thurgh him it bigan.'

Than seyde Gamelyn to the justise,
'Now is thy power y-don, thou most nedes arise;
Thow hast yeven domes that ben yvel dight,
I wil sitten in thy sete, and dressen hem aright.'
The justice sat stille, and roos nought anoon;
And Gamelyn clevede his cheeke boon;
Gamelyn took him in his arm, and no more spak,
But threw him over the barre, and his arm to-brak.
Durste non to Gamelyn seye but good,
For-fered of the company that withoute stood.
Gamelyn sette him doun in the justices sete,
And sire Ote his brother by him, and Adam at his feet.
Whan Gamelyn was i-set in the justices stede,
Herkneth of a bourde that Gamelyn dede.
He leet fetre the justice and his fals brother,
And dede hem come to the barre, that oon with that other.
Tho Gamelyn hadde thus y-doon, had he no rest,
Til he had enquered who was on the quest
For to deme his brother, sir Ote, for to honge;
Er he wiste which they were he thoughte ful longe.
But as sone as Gamelyn wiste wher they were,
He dede hem everichone fetere in feere,
And bringen hem to the barre, and sette hem in rewe;
'By my faith!' seyde the justice, 'the scherreve is a schrewe.'
Than seyde Gamelyn to the justise,
'Thou hast y-yeve domes of the wors assise,
And the twelve sisours that weren of the queste,
They schul ben hanged this day, so have I reste.'
Thanne seide the scherreve to yonge Gamelyn,

'Lord I crie the mercy, brother art thou myn.'
'Therfore,' seyde Gamelyn, 'have thou Cristes curs,
For and thou were maister, yit I schulde have wors.'
But for to make short tale, and nought to tarie longe,
He ordeyned him a queste of his men so stronge;
The justice and the scherreve bothe honged hye,
To weyven with ropes and with the wynd drye;
And the twelve sisours, sorwe have that rekke!
Alle they were hanged faste by the nekke.
Thus ended the fals knight with his treccherie,
That ever had i-lad his lyf in falsnes and folye;
He was hanged by the nek, and nought by the purs,
That was the meede that he had for his fadres curs.
Sir Ote was eldest, and Gamelyn was ying,
They wenten with here freendes even to the kyng;
They made pees with the kyng of the best assise.
The kyng loved wel sir Ote, and made him a justise.
And after the kyng made Gamelyn, both in est and west,
Chef justice of al his fre forest;
Alle his wighte yonge men the kyng foryaf here gilt,
And sitthen in good office the kyng hem hath i-pilt.
Thus wan Gamelyn his lond and his leede,
And wrak him of his enemys, and quyt hem here meede,
And sire Ote his brother made him his heir,
And siththen wedded Gamelyn a wyf bothe good and feyr;
They lyveden togidere whil that Crist wolde,
And sithen was Gamelyn graven under molde.
And so schal we alle, may ther no man fle:
God bryng us to the joye that ever schal be!
Amen!

THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGE.

WRE Hoste sawh that the brighte sonne
The arke of his artificial day hath i-ronne
The fourthe part, of half an hour and more;
And though he were nat depe *expert* in lore,
He wist it was the *eightetene* day
Of April, that is messanger to May:
And sawe wel that the schade of every tree
Was in the lengthe the same quantité
That was the body erecte, that caused it;
And therfore by the schadwe he took his wit.
That Phebus, which that schoon so fair and brighte,
Degrees was five and fourty clombe on highte;
And for that day, as in that latitude,
Hit was ten of the clokke, he gan conclude;
And sodeynly he plight his hors aboute.
'Lordynges,' quod he, 'I warne you al the route,
The fourthe party of this day is goon;
Now, for the love of God and of seint Jon,
Leseth no tyme, as *fer*forth as ye may.
Lordynges, the tyme passeth night and day,
And stelith fro us, what pryvely slepyng,
And what thurgh neeligence in oure wakyng,
As doth the streem, that torneth never agayn,
Descendyng fro the mounteyn into playn.
Wel can Senek and many philosopher
Bywaylen time, more than gold in cofre.
For losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of tyme schendeth us, quod he.

It wil nat come agayn, withoute drede,
Nomore than wol Malkyns maydenhede,
Whan sche hadde lost it in hir wantownesse.
Let us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse.
'Sir Man of Lawe,' quod he, 'so have ye blisse,
Telle us a tale anon, as forward ys.
Ye be submitted thurgh your fre assent
To stonden in this cas at my juggement.
Acquyteth yow, and holdeth youre byheste;
Than have ye doon your devour atte leste.'
'Host,' quod he, '*De par Dieux I assente*,
To breke forward is nat myn entent.
Byheste is dette, and I wol holde fayn
Al my byhest, I can no better sayn.
For such lawe as a man yeveth another wight,
He schuld himselve usen hit by right.
Thus wol oure text: but natheles certeyn
I can right now non other tale seyn,
That Chaucer, they he can but lewedly
On metres and on rymyng certeynly,
Hath seyd hem in such Englisch as he can
Of olde tyme, as knoweth many man.
And yif he have nought sayd hem, leeve brother,
In o bok, he hath seyd hem in another.
For he hath told of lovers up and doun,
Moo than Ovide made of mencioun
In his Epistelles, that ben so olde.
What schuld I tellen hem, syn they be tolde?
In youthe he made of Coys and Alcioun,
And siththe hath he spoke of everychon
These noble wyfes, and these lovers eeke,
Who-so wole his large volume seeke,
Cleped the seintes legendes of Cupide:

Ther may he see the large woundes wyde
Of Lucresse, and of Babiloun Tysbee;
The sorwe of Dido for the fals Enee;
The tree of Philles for hir Demephon;
The pleynt of Dyane and of Ermyon,
Of Adrian, and of Ysyphilee;
The barreyn yle stondyng in the see:
The dreynt Leandere for his fayre Erro;
The teeres of Eleyn, and eek the woo
Of Bryxseyde, and of Ledomia;
The cruelté of the queen Medea,
The litel children hangyng by the hals,
For thilke Jason, that was of love so fals.
O Ypermystre, Penollope, and Alceste,
Youre wyfhood he comendeth with the beste.
But certeynly no worde writeth he
Of thilke wikked ensample of Canace,
That loved hir owen brother synfully;
On whiche corsed stories I seye fy!
Or elles of Tyro Appoloneus,
How that the cursed kyng Anteochus
Byreft his doughter of hir maydenhede,
That is so horrible a tale as man may reede,
Whan he hir threw upon the pament.
And therfore he of ful avysement
Wolde never wryte in non of his sermouns
Of such unkynde abhominaciouns;
Ne I wol non reherse, if that I may.
But of my tale how schal I do this day?
Me were loth to be lykned douteles
To Muses, that men clepen Pyerides,
(*Methamorphoseos* wot what I mene);
But natheles I recche nat a bene,

They I come after him with hawe-bake,
I speke in prose, and let him rymes make.'
And with that word, he with a sobre cheere
Bygan his tale, as ye schal after heere.

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

HATEFUL harm, condicion of povert,
With thurst, with cold, with honger so confoundyd,
To asken help it schameth in thin hert,
If thou non aske, with neede so art thou woundyd,
That verray neede unwrappeth al thy woundes hyd;
Maugré thyn heed thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy dispence.
Thow blamest Crist, and seyst ful bitterly,
He mysdeparteth riches temporal;
And thyn neyhebour thou wytest synfully;
And seyst thou hast to litel, and he hath al.
Parfay, seystow, som tyme he rekne schal,
Whan that his tayl schal brennen in the gleede,
For he nought helpeth the needful in his neede.
Herkneth what is the sentens of the wyse,
Bet is to dye than haven indigence;
Thy-selve neyghebour wol the despyse,
If thou be pore, farwel thy reverence.
Yet of the wyse man tak this sentence,
Alle the dayes of pore men be wikke;
Be war therfore or thou come to that prikke.
If thou be pore, thy brother hateth the,
And alle thy frendes fleeth fro the, allas!

O riche marchaundz, ful of wele be ye,
O noble prudent folk as in this cas,
Youre bagges beth nat fuld with ambes aas,
But with sys synk, that renneth on your chaunce;
At Crystemasse wel mery may ye daunce.
Ye seeke land and see for your wynnynges,
As wyse folk as ye knowe alle thastates
Of regnes, ye be fadres of tydynges,
Of tales, bothe of pees and of debates.
I were right now of tales desolat,
Nere that a merchaunt, gon siththen many a yere,
Me taught a tale, which ye schal after heere.
In Surrie dwellede whilom a companye
Of chapmen riche, and therto sad and trewe,
That wyde-where sent her spycerye,
Clothes of gold, and satyn rich of hewe.
Her chaffar was so thrifty and so newe,
That every wight hadde deynté to chaffare
With hem, and eek to selle hem of here ware.
Now fel it, that the maystres of that sort
Han schapen hem to Rome for to wende,
Were it for chapmanhode or for disport,
Non other message nolde they thider sende,
But came hemself to Rome, this is the ende;
And in such place as thought hem avauntage
For here entent, they tooke her herburgage.
Sojourned have these marchauntz in the toun
A certeyn tyme, as fel to here plesaunce.
But so bifell, that thexcellent renoun
Of themperoures doughter dame Custaunce
Reported was, with every circumstaunce,
Unto these Surrienz marchauntz, in such wyse
Fro day to day, as I schal you devyse.

This was the comyn voys of every man:
'Oure emperour of Rome, God him see!
A doughter hath, that, sith the world bygan,
To rekne as wel hir goodnes as her bewté,
Nas never such another as was sche.
I prey to God hir save and susteene,
And wolde sche were of al Europe the queene.
'In hire is hye bewté, withoute pryde;
Yowthe, withoute grefhed or folye;
To alle here werkes vertu is hire gyde;
Humblesse hath slayne in hir tyrrannye;
Sche is myrour of alle curtesye,
Hir herte is verrey chambre of holynesse,
Hir hond mynistre of fredom and almesse.'
And al this voys is soth, as God is trewe.
But now to purpos let us turne ayein:
These marchantz have don fraught here schippes newe,
And whan they have this blisful mayde seyn,
Home to Surrey be they went ayein,
And doon here needes, as they have don yore,
And lyven in wele, I can you saye no more.
Nowfel it, that these marchauntz stooden in grace
Of him that was the sowdan of Surrye.
For whan they come fro eny straunge place,
He wolde of his benigne curtesye
Make hem good chere, and busily aspye
Tydynges of sondry regnes, for to lere
The wordes that they mighte seen and heere.
Among other thinges specially
These marchauntz him told of dame Constaunce
So gret noblesse, in ernest so ryally,
That this sowdan hath caught so gret plesaunce

To have hir figure in his remembraunce,
That al his lust, and al his besy cure,
Was for to love hir, whiles his lyf may dure.
Paraventure in thilke large booke,
Which that is cleped the heven, i-write was
With sterres, whan that he his burthe took,
That he for love schulde have his deth, allas!
For in the sterres, clerere than is glas,
Is wryten, God woot, who-so cowthe it rede,
The deth of every man, withouten drede.
In sterres many a wynter therbyfore,
Was writé the deth of Ector and Achilles,
Of Pompe, Julius, er they were i-bore;
The stryf of Thebes, and of Ercules,
Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
The deth; but mennes wittes ben so dulle,
That no wight can wel rede it at the fulle.
This sowdan for his pryvé counseil sente,
And schortly of this mater for to pace,
He hath to hem declared his entente,
And seyd him certeyn, but he might have grace
To have Constance withinne a litel space,
He nas but deed, and charged hem in hyghe
To schapen for his lyf som remedye.
Dyverse men diveres thinges seyde,
The argumentes casten up and down;
Many a subtyl resoun forth they leyden;
They spekyn of magike, and of ambusioun;
But finally, as in conclusioun,
They can nought seen in that non avauntage,
Ne in non other wey, save in mariage.
Then sawghe they therein such difficulté
By wey of resoun, to speke it al playn,

Bycause that ther was such dyversité
Bitwen here bothe lawes, as they sayn,
They trowe that 'no cristen prince wolde fayn
Wedden his child under our lawe swete,
That us was taught by Mahoun oure prophete.'
And he answerde: 'Rather than I lese
Constance, I wol be cristen doubteles;
I moot be heres, I may non other cheese;
I pray you haldeth your arguments in pees,
Saveth my lyf, and beth nat recheles.
Goth, geteth hire that my lyf in cure,
For in this wo I may no lenger dure.'
What needeth gretter dilatacioun?
I say, by tretys and ambassatrye,
And by the popes mediacioun,
And al the chirche, and al the chyvalrye,
That in destruccioun of mawmetrye,
And in encresse of Cristes lawe deere,
They ben acordid, as ye schal after heere,
How that the soudan and his baronage,
And alle his lieges schuld i-crystned be,
And he schal have Constance in mariage,
And certeyn gold, I not what quantité,
And therfore founden they suffisant seurté.
This same acord was sworn on every syde;
Now, fair Constance, almighty God the guyde!
Now wolde som men wayten, as I gesse,
That I schulde tellen al the purvyaunce,
That themperour of his gret noblesse
Hath schapen for his doughter dame Constaunce.
Wel may men knowe that so gret ordynaunce
May no man telle in so litel a clause,
As was arrayed for so high a cause.

Bisschops ben schapen with hir for to wende,
Lordes, ladyes, and knightes of renoun,
And other folk ynowe, this is the ende.
And notefied is thurghout the toun,
That every wight with gret devocioun
Schulde preye Crist, that he this mariage
Receyve in gree, and spede this viage.
The day is come of hire departyng,
(I say the woful day *fatal* is come)
That ther may be no lenger tarryyng,
But forthe-ward they dresse hem alle and some.
Constance, that with sorwe is overcome,
Ful pale arist, and dresseth hir to wende.
For wel sche saugh ther nas non other ende.
Allas! what wonder is it though sche wepte,
That schal be sent to *so* straunge nacioun,
Fro freendes, that so tenderly hir kepte,
And to be bounde undur subjeccioun
Of oon sche knew nat his condicioun?
Housbondes ben al goode, and han be yore;
That knowen wyfes, I dar saye no more.
'Fader,' sche seide, 'thy wrecched child Constaunce,
Thy yonge doughter fostred up so softe,
And ye, my mooder, my soverayn plesaunce
Over al thing, outaken Criste on lofte,
Constaunce your child hir recomaundeth ofte
Unto your grace; for I schal into Surrye,
Ne schal I never see you more with ye.
'Allas! unto the Barbre nacioun
I most anoon, sethens it is your wille:
But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun,
So yeve me grace his hestes to fulfille,
I, wrecched womman, no fors they I spille!

Wommen ben born to thraldam and penaunce,
And to ben under mannes governaunce.'
I trowe at Troye whan Pirrus brak the wal,
Or Yleon that brende Thebes the citee,
Ne at Rome for the harme thurgh Hanibal,
That Romayns han venquysshed tymes thre,
Nas herd such tender wepyng for pité,
As in the chambur was for hir partynge;
But forth sche moot, whether sche weep or synge.
O firste mevyng cruel firmament,
With thi diurnal swough that crowdest ay,
And hurlest al fro est to occident.
That naturelly wold hold another way;
Thyn crowdyng sette the heven in such array
At the bygynnyng of this fiers viage,
That cruel Martz hath slayn this marriage.
Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lordes helples falle, allas!
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.
O Mariz Attezere, as in this caas;
O feeble moone, unhappy been thi paas,
Thou knettest the ther thou art nat receyved,
Ther thou wer wel fro thennes artow weyved.
Inprudent emperour of Rome, allas!
Was ther no philosopher in al thy toun?
Is no tyme bet than other in such caas?
Of viage is ther noon eleccioun.
Namly to folk of heigh condicioun,
Nought whan a roote is of a birthe i-knowe?
Allas! we ben to lewed, and eek to slowe.
To schippe is brought this woful faire mayde
Solempnely, with every circumstaunce.
'Now Jhesu Crist so be with you,' she sayde.
Ther nys nomor, but farwel, fair Custaunce;

She peyneth hire to make good contienaunce.
And forth I lete hire sayle in this manere,
And torne I wol ayein to my matiere.
The moder of the sawdan, ful of vices,
Aspyed hath hir sones playn entente,
How he wol lete his olde sacrifices;
And right anoon sche for hir counseil sente:
And they ben come, to knowe what sche mente;
And whan assembled was this folk in fere,
Sche sette hir doun, and sayd as ye schal heere.
'Lordes,' quod sche, 'ye knowen everichon,
How that my sone in poynt is for to lete
The holy lawes of our Alkaroun,
Yeven *by* Goddes messangere Makamete;
But oon avow to grete God I hete,
The lyf schulde rather out of my body sterte,
Or Makametes law go out of myn herte.
'What schal us tyden of this newe lawe
But thraldam to oure body and penaunce,
And afterward in helle to be drawe,
For we reneyede Mahound oure creaunce?
But, lordes, wol ye maken assuraunce,
As I schal say, assentyng to my lore?
And I schal make us sauf for evermore.'
They sworen and assenten every man
To lyfe with hir and dye, and by hir stonde:
And everich in the beste wise he can
To strengthen hir schal al his frendes fonde.
And sche hath emperise take on honde,
Which ye schul heere that I schal devyse,
And to hem alle sche spak in this wyse:
'We schul first feyne ous cristendom to take;
Cold watir schal nat greve us but a lite;

And I schal such a fest and revel make,
That, as I trow, I schal the sowdan quyte.
For though his wyf be cristned never so white,
Sche schal have need to waissche away the rede,
They sche a font of watir with hir lede.'
O sowdones, root of iniquité
Virago thou Semyram the secounde;
O serpent under feminité,
Lyk to the serpent deep in helle i-bounde;
O feyned womman, alle that may confounde
Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
Is bred in the, as nest of every vice.
O Satan, envyous syn thilke day
That thou were chased fro oure heritage,
Wel knewest thou to wommen the olde way.
Thou madest Eve to bryng us in servage,
Thou wolt fordoon this cristen mariage.
Thyn instrument so (weylaway the while!)
Makestow of wommen whan thou wolt bygyle.
This sowdones, whom I thus blame and wary
Let pryvely hir counseil gon his way;
What schuld I in this tale lenger tary?
Sche rideth to the sowdan on a day,
And seyd him, that sche wolde reney hir lay,
And cristendam of prestes handes fonge,
Repentyng hir sche hethen was so longe;
Bysechyng him to doon hir that honour,
That sche most have the cristen men to feste;
'To plesen hem I wil do my labour.'
The sawdan seith, 'I wol do at your heste,'
And knelyng, thanketh hir of that requeste;
So glad he was, he nyst nat what to seye.
Sche kyst hir sone, and hom sche goth hir weye.

Arryved ben the cristen folke to londe
In Surry, with a gret solempne route,
And hastily this soudan sent his sonde,
First to his moder, and al the regne aboute,
And seyd, his wyf was comen out of doute,
And preyeth hir for to ride ayein the queene,
The honour of his regne to susteene.

Gret was the prees, and riche was tharray
Of Surriens and Romayns mette in feere.
The moodur of the sowdan riche and gay
Receyved hir with al so glad a cheere,
As eny moodir might hir doughter deere;
And to the nexte citee ther bysyde
A softe paas solempnely thay ryde.

Nought trow I the triumphe of Julius,
Of which that Lukan maketh moche bost,
Was ryaller, ne more curious,
Than was thassemble of this blisful oost.
But this scorpioun, this wikked goost,
The sowdones, for al hir flaterynge,
Cast under this ful mortally to stynge.

The sawdan comth himself sone after this
So really, that wonder is to telle;
And welcometh hir with al joy and blys.
And thus with mirth and joy I let hem dwelle.
The fruyt of this matier is that I telle.
Whan tyme com, men thought it for the best
That revel stynt, and men goon to her rest.

The tyme com, the olde sowdonesse
Ordeyned hath this fest of which I tolde;
And to the feste cristen folk hem dresse
In generale, bothe yong and olde.
Ther men may fest and realté byholde,

And deyntes mo than I can of devyse,
But al to deere they bought it ar they ryse.
O sodeyn wo! that ever art successour
To worldly blis, spreynd is with bitternesse
The ende of oure joye, of oure worldly labour;
Wo occupieth the fyn of oure gladnesse.
Herken this counseil for thyn sikernesse;
Upon thyn glade dayes have in thi mynde
The unwar woo that cometh ay bihynde.
For schortly for to tellen at o word,
The sawdan and the cristen everichone
Ben al to-hewe and stiked atte bord,
But it were dame Constaunce allone.
This olde sowdones, this cursede crone,
Hath with hir frendes doon this cursede dede,
For sche hirself wold al the contre lede.
Ne ther was Surrien noon that was converted,
That of the counseil of the sawdon woot,
That he nas al to-hewe or he asterted;
And Constaunce have they take anon foot-hoot,
And in a schippe, stereles, God it woot,
They have hir set, and bad hir lerne to sayle
Out of Surry ayein-ward to Ytaile.
A certein tresour that sche thider ladde,
And, soth to sayn, vitaile gret plente,
They have hir yeven, and clothes eek sche hadde,
And forth sche sayleth in the salte see.
O my Constaunce, ful of benignité,
O emperoures yonge doughter deere,
He that is Lord of fortun be thi steere!
Sche blesseth hir, and with ful pitous voys
Unto the croys of Crist than seyde sche:
'O cler, O welful auter, holy croys,

Red of the lambes blood, ful of pité,
That wissh the world fro old iniquité,
Me fro the feend and fro his clowes keepe,
That day that I schal drenchen in the deepe.
'Victorious tre, protecciouu of trewe,
That oonly were worthy for to bere
That Kyng of Heven, with his woundes newe,
The white Lambe, that hurt was with a spere;
Flemer of feendes, out of him and here
On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,
Me kepe, and yif me might my lyf to menden.'
Yeres and dayes flette this creature
Thurghout the see of Grece, into the strayte
Of Marrok, as it was hir adventure.
O many a sory mele may sche bayte,
After hir deth ful ofte may sche wayte,
Or that the wilde wawe wol hir dryve
Unto the place ther as sche schal arryve.
Men mighten aske, why sche was nought slayn?
Ek at the fest who might hir body save?
And I answere that demaunde agayn,
Who savede Daniel in thorrible cave,
That every wight, sauf he, mayster or knave,
Was with the lioun frete, or he asterte?
Ne wight but God, that he bar in his herte.
God lust to schewe his wondurful miracle
In hir, for we schulde seen his mighty werkes;
Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,
By certeyne menes ofte, as knowen clerkes,
Doth thing for certeyn ende, that ful derk is
To mannes witt, that for our ignoraunce
Ne can nought knowe his prudent purvyaunce.
Now sith sche was nat at the fest i-slawe,
Who kepte hir fro drenching in the see?

Who kepte Jonas in the fisches mawe,
Til he was spouted up at Ninive?
Wel may men knowe, it was no wight but He
That kepte the pepul Ebrayk fro her drenchyng,
With drye feet thurghout the see passyng.
Who *bad* foure spiritz of tempest,
That power han to noyen land and see,
Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
Anoyen neyther londe, see, ne tree?
Sothly the comaunder of that was He
That fro the tempest ay this womman kepte,
As wel when sche awok as when sche slepte.
Wher might this womman mete and drinke have?
Thre yer and more, how lasteth hir vitaille?
Who fedde the Egipcien Marie in the cave,
Or in desert? no wight but Crist *saunz faile*.
Fyf thousand folk, it was gret mervaile
With loves fyf and fissches tuo to feede;
God sent his foysoun at her grete neede.
Sche dryveth forth into oure occean
Thurghout oure wilde see, til atte laste
Under an holte, that nempnen *I ne* can,
Fer in Northumberland, the wawe hir caste,
And in the sand the schip stykede so faste,
That thennes wold it nought in al a tyde;
The wille of Crist was that sche schold abyde.
The constabil of the castel doun is fare
To se this wrak, and al the schip he soughte,
And fond this wery womman ful of care;
He fand also the tresour that sche broughte:
In hir langage mercy sche bisoughte,
The lif out of her body for to twynne,
Hir to delyver of woo that sche was inne.
A maner Latyn corupt was hir speche,

But algates therby sche was understonde.
The constabil, whan him luste no lenger seche.
This woful womman broughte he to londe.
Sche kneleth doun, and thanketh Goddes sonde
But what sche was, sche wolde no man seye
For foul ne faire, though sche scholde deye.
Sche was, sche seyde, so mased in the see,
That sche forgat hir mynde, by hire trowthe.
The constable had of hir so gret pitee,
And eek his wyf, they wepeden for routhe;
Sche was so diligent withouten slouthe
To serve and plese ever in that place,
That alle hir loven that loken on hir face.
The constable and dame Hermegyld his wyf,
To telle you playne, payenes bothe were;
But Hermegyld loved Constance as hir lyf;
And Constance hath so long herberwed there
In orisoun, with many a bitter teere,
Til Jhesu hath converted thurgh his grace
Dame Hermegyld, the constables wif of the place.
In al the lond no cristen men durste route;
Al cristen men ben fled from that contré
Thurgh payens, that conquered al aboute
The places of the north by land and see.
To Wales fled the cristianité
Of olde Britouns, dwellyng in this yle;
Ther was hir refut for the mene while.
But yit nere cristen Britouns so exiled,
That ther nere some in here pryvité
Honourede Christ, and hethen folk bygiled;
And neigh the castel such ther dwellide thre.
That oon of hem was blynd, and mighte nat se,
But-if it were with eyen of his mynde,

With which men seen after that they ben blynde.
Bright was the sonne, as in someres day,
For which the constable and his wif also
And Constaunce hadde take the righte way
Toward the see, a forlong wey or two,
To pleyen, and to romen to and fro;
And in that walk this blynde man they mette,
Croked and olde, with eyen fast y-schette.
'In name of Crist,' cryede this old Britoun,
'Dame Hermegyld, yif me my sight ayeyn!'
This lady wax affrayed of the soun,
Lest that hir houseband, schortly to sayn,
Wold hir for Jhesu Cristes love have slayn,
Til Constaunce made hir bold, and bad hir werche
The wil of Crist, as doughter of holy chirche.
The constable wax abaisshed of that sight,
And sayde, 'What amounteth al this fare?'
Constaunce answerede, 'Sir, it is Cristes might,
That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare.'
And so ferforth sche gan hir lay declare,
That sche the constable, er that it was eve
Converted, and on Crist made him bileve.
This constable was not lord of the place
Of which I speke, ther he Constance fond,
But kept it strongly many a wynter space
Under Alla, kyng of Northumberlond,
That was ful wys, and worthy of his hond,
Ayein the Scottes, as men may wel heere.
But tourne ayein I wil to my mateere.
Satan, that ever us wayteth to begile,
Sawe of Constaunce *al hir perfeccioun*,
And cast anoon how he mighte quyt hir while;
And made a yong knight, that dwelt in the toun,

Love hir so hoot of foul affeccioun,
That verrayly him thought he schulde spille,
But he of hire oones had his wille.
He wowith hir, but it avayleth nought,
Sche wolde do no synne by no weye;
And for despyt, he compassed in his thought
To maken hir a schamful deth to deye.
He wayteth whan the constable was aweye,
And pryvyly upon a nyght he crepte
In Hermyngyldes chambre whil sche slepte.
Wery, for-waked in here orisoun,
Slepeth Constaunce, and Hermyngyld also.
This knight, thurgh Satanas temptacioun,
Al softely is to the bed y-go,
And kutte the throte of Hermegild a-two,
And leyde the bloody knyf by dame Constaunce,
And went his way, ther God yeve him meschaunce.
Sone after comth this constable hom agayn,
And eek Alla, that was kyng of that lond,
And say his wyf dispitously i-slayn,
For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond;
And in the bed the blody knyf he fond
By Dame Custaunce: allas! what mighte she say?
For verray woo hir witt was al away.
To king Alla was told al this meschaunce,
And eek the tyme, and wher, and eek the wyse
That in a schip was founden this Constaunce,
As here bifore ye have herd me devyse.
The kinges hert of pité gan agrise,
Whan he saugh so benigne a creature
Falle in disese and in mysaventure.
For as the lomb toward his deth is brought,
So stant this innocent bifore the kyng.

This false knight, that hath this tresoun wrought,
Bereth hir an hand that sche hath don this thing;
But nevertheles ther was gret mornyng
Among the people, and seyn they can not gesse
That sche had*de* doon so gret a wikkednesse.
For they han seyen hir so vertuous,
And lovyng Hermegyld right as hir lyf;
Of this bar witnesse everich in that hous,
Save he that slowgh Hermegyld with his knyf.
This gentil kyng hath caught a gret motyf
Of his witnesse, and thought he wold enquere
Deppere in this cas, a trouthe to lere.
Allas! Constaunce, thou ne has no champioun,
Ne fighte canstow nat, so welaway!
But He that for oure redempcioun
Bonde Sathan, *that* yit lith ther he lay,
So be thy stronge champioun this day;
For but Crist upon the miracle kythe,
Withouten gilt thou schalt be slayn as swithe.
Sche set hir doun on knees, and than sche sayde
'Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
Fro false blame; and thou, mercyful mayde,
Mary I mene, doughter of seint Anne,
Bifore whos child aungeles syng Osanne;
If I be gultles of this felonye,
My socour be, for elles schal I dye!'
Have ye not seye som tyme a pale face,
Among a prees, of him that hath be lad
Toward his deth, wher him geyneth no grace,
And such a colour in his face hath had,
Men mighte knowe his face was so bystad,
Among alle the faces in that route;
So stant Constance, and loketh hire about.

O queenes lyvyng in prosperité,
Duchesses, and ye ladies everychon,
Haveth som reuthe on hir adversité;
An emperoures doughter stond allon;
Sche nath no wight to whom to make hir moon:
O blod ryal, that stondest in this drede,
Ferre be thy frendes at thy grete neede!
This Alla kyng hath such compassioun,
As gentil hert is fulfild of pité,
That from his eyen ran the water doun.
'Now hastily do fech a book,' quod he;
'And if this knight wil swere how that sche
This womman slowgh, yet wol we us avyse,
Whom that we wille schal be oure justise.'
A Britoun book, i-write with Evaungiles,
Was fette, and on this book he swor anoon
Sche gultif was; and in the mene whiles
An hond him smot upon the nekke boon,
That doun he fel anon right as a stoon;
And bothe his yen brast out of his face,
In sight of every body in that place.
A vois was herd, in general audience,
And seide, 'Thou hast disclaundred gulteles
The doughter of holy chirche in hire presence;
Thus hastow doon, and yit I holde my pees?'
Of this mervaile agast was al the prees,
As mased folk they stooden everychon
For drede of wreche, save Custaunce allon.
Gret was the drede and eek the repentaunce
Of hem that hadden wrong suspeccioun
Upon the sely innocent Custaunce;
And for this miracle, in conclusioun,
And by Custaunces mediacioun,

The kyng, and many other in the place,
Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!
This false knight was slayn for his untrouthe
By juggement of Alla hastyly;
And yit Custaunce hath of his deth gret routhe.
And after this Jhesus of his mercy
Made Alla wedde ful solempnely
This holy mayde, that is bright and schene,
And thus hath Crist i-maad Constance a queene.
But who was woful, if I schal not lye,
Of this weddyng but Domegild and *no mo*,
The kynges mooder, ful of tyrannye?
Hir thought hir cursed herte brast a-two;
Sche wolde nat hir sone had i-do so;
Hir thoughte despyte, that he schulde take
So straunge a creature unto his make.
Me lust not of the caf ne of the stree
Make so long a tale, as of the corn.
What schuld I telle of the realté
Of this mariage, or which cours goth biforn,
Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?
The fruyt of every tale is for to seye;
They ete and drynk, and daunce and synge and pleye.
They gon to bed, as it was skile and right;
For though that wyfes ben ful holy thinges,
They moste take in pacience a-night
Such maner necessaries as ben plesynges
To folk that han i-wedded hem with rynges,
And halvendel her holynesse ley aside
As for the tyme, it may non other betyde.
On hire he gat a knave child anoon,
And to a bisschope, and to *his* constable eeke,

He took his wyf to kepe, whan he is goon
To Scotlond-ward, his foomen for to seeke.
Now faire Custaunce, that is so humble and meeke,
So long is goon with childe til that stille
Sche held hir chambre, abidyng Goddes wille.
The tyme is come, a knave childe sche bere;
Mauricius atte funstone men him calle.
This constabil doth come forth a messager,
And wrot to his kyng that cleped was Alle,
How that this blisful tydyng is bifalle,
And other thinges spedful for to seye.
He taketh the lettre, and forth he goth his weye.
This messanger, to doon his avauntage,
Unto the kynges moder he goth ful swithe,
And saluеth hire fair in his langage.
'Madame,', quod he, 'ye may be glad and blithe,
And thanke God an hundred thousand sithe;
My lady queen hath child, withouten doute
To joye and blis of al the reame aboute.
'Lo heer the lettres sealed of this thing,
That I mot bere with al the hast I may;
If ye wole ought unto youre sone the kyng,
I am youre servaunt bothe night and day.'
Doungyld answerde, 'As now this tyme, nay;
But here al nyght I wol thou take thy rest,
To morwen I wil saye the what me lest.'
This messanger drank sadly ale and wyn,
And stolen were his lettres pryvely
Out of his box, whil he sleep as a swyn;
And countrefeet they were subtily;
Another sche him wroot ful synfully,
Unto the kyng direct of this matiere
Fro his constable, as ye schul after heere.

The lettre spak, the queen delyvered was
Of so orryble and feendly creature,
That in the castel noon so hardy was
That eny while dorste therin endure;
The mooder was an elf by aventure
Bycome by charmes or by sorcerie,
And every man hatith hir companyne.
Wo was this kyng whan he this letter had*de* sein,
But to no wight he told his sorwes sore,
But of his owen hand he wrot agayn:
'Welcome the sond of Crist for everemore
To me, that am now lerned in this lore;
Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy pleasaunce!
My lust I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.
'Kepeth this child, al be it foul or fair,
And eek my wyf, unto myn hom comyng;
Crist whan him lust may sende me an hair
More agreable than this to my likyng.'
This lettre he seleth, pryvyly wepyng,
Which to the messager he took ful sone,
And forth he goth, ther nys no more to done.
O messager, fulfild of dronkenesse,
Strong is thy breth, thy lymes faltren ay,
And thou bywreyest alle sykernesse;
Thy mynde is lorn, thou janglest as a jay;
Thy face is torned al in a newe array;
Ther drunkenesse regneth in eny route,
Ther is no counseil hid, withouten doute.
O Domegyld, I have non Englisch digne
Unto thy malice and thy tyrannye;
And therfor to the feend I the resigne,
Let him endyten of thi treccherie.
Fy, mannyssch, fy!—o nay, by God, I lye;

Fy! feendly spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Though thou here walke, thy spirit is in helle.
This messanger comth fro the kyng agayn,
And at the kinges modres court he lighte,
And sche was of this messenger ful fayn,
And pleseth him in al that ever sche mighte.
He drank, and wel his gurdel underpighte;
He slepeth, and he fareth in his gyse
Al nyght, unto the sonne gan arise.
Eft were his lettres stolen everichon,
And countrefeted lettres in this wise:
'The kyng comaundeth his constable anon,
Up peyne of hangyng of an heigh justise,
That he ne schulde suffre in no maner wyse
Constaunce in his regne for to abyde
Thre dayes, and a quarter of a tyde;
But in the same schip as he hir fond,
Hire and hir yonge sone, and al hire gere,
He schulde putte, and crowde fro the londe,
And charge hire that sche never eft come there.'
O my Constaunce, wel may thy goost have fere,
And siepyng in thy drem ben in penaunce,
Whan Domegyld cast al this ordynaunce.
This messanger a-morwe, whan he awook,
Unto the castel held the nexte way;
And to the constable he the lettre took;
And whan that he the pitous lettre say,
Ful ofte he seyd allas and welaway;
'Lord Crist,' quod he, 'how may this world endure?
So ful of synne is many a creature!
O mighty God, if that it be thy wille,
Seth thou art rightful jugge, how may this be
That thou wolt suffre innocentz to spille,

And wikked folk regne in prosperité?
O good Constance, allas! so wo is me,
That I moot be thy tormentour, or deye
On schamful deth, ther is non other weye.'
Wepen bothe yong and olde in al that place,
Whan that the kyng this corsed lettre sente;
And Constance with a dedly pale face
The ferthe day toward hir schip sche wente.
But nevertheles sche taketh in good entente
The wil of Christ, and knelyng on the grounde
Sche sayde, 'Lord, ay welcome be thy sonde!
He that me kepte fro the false blame,
Whil I was on the lond amonges you,
He can me kepe from harm and eek fro schame
In the *salte* see, although I se nat how;
As strong as ever he was, he is right now,
In him trust I, and in his mooder deere,
That is to me my sayl and eek my steere.'
Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
And knelyng pitously to him sche sayde:
'Pees, litle sone, I wol do the noon harm.'
With that hir kerchef of hir hed sche brayde,
And over his litel yghen sche it layde,
And in hir arm sche lullith it wel faste,
And unto heven hir eyghen up sche caste.
'Moder,' quod sche, 'and mayde bright, Marie
Soth is, that thurgh wommannes eggement
Mankynde was lorn and dampned ay to dye,
For which thy child was on a cros to-rent;
Thyn blisful eyghen sawh al this torment,
Then nys ther noon comparisoun bitwene
Thy wo, and any woo man may sustene.
'Thow saugh thy child i-slawe byfor thyn yen,

And yit now lyveth my litel child, parfay;
Now, lady bright, to whom alle wofulle cryen,
Thou glory of wommanhod, thou faire may,
Thou heven of refute, brighte sterre of day,
Rewe on my child, that of thyn gentilnesse
Rewest on every synful in destresse.
'O litel child, alas! what is thi gilt,
That never wroughtest synne as yet, pardé?
Why wil thyn harde fader han the spilt?
O mercy, deere constable,' seyde sche,
'And let my litel child here dwelle with the;
And if thou darst not saven him for blame,
So kys him oones in his fadres name.'
Therwith sche lokede bak-ward to the londe,
And seyde, 'Farwel, housbond rewtheles!'
And up sche rist, and walketh doun the stronde
Toward the schip, hir folweth al the prees;
And ever sche preyeth hir child to hold his pees,
And took hir leve, and with an holy entente
Sche blesseth hire, and to the schip sche wente
Vytailled was the schip, it is no drede,
Abundauntly for hire a ful longe space;
And other necessaries that schulde nede
Sche had ynowgh, heryed be Cristez grace;
For wynd and water almighty God purchace,
And bryng hir hom, I can no bettre saye,
But in the see sche dryveth forth hir waye.
Alla the kyng cometh hom soon after this
Unto the castel, of the which I tolde,
And asketh wher his wyf and his child ys.
The constable gan aboute his herte colde,
And playnly al the maner he him tolde
As ye han herd, I can telle it no better,

And schewede the kynges seal and his letter;
And seyde, 'Lord, as ye comaundede me
Up peyne of deth, so have I do certayn.'
This messager tormented was, til he
Moste biknowe and telle it plat and playn,
Fro nyght to night in what place he hadde layn;
And thus by witt and subtil enquerynge,
Ymagined was by wham this gan to sprynge.
The hand was knowen that the lettre wroot,
And al the venym of this cursed dede;
But in what wyse, certeynly I noot.
Theffect is this, that Alla, out of drede,
His moder slough, as men may pleynly reede,
For that sche traytour was to hir ligeaunce.
Thus endeth olde Domegild with meschaunce.
The sorwe that this Alla night and day
Makth for his wyf and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it telle may.
But now I wol unto Custaunce go,
That fleeteth in the see in peyne and wo
Fyve yeer and more, as liketh Cristes sonde,
Er that hir schip approched unto londe.
Under an hethen castel atte laste,
Of which the name in my text nought I fynde,
Constaunce and eek hir child the see upcaste.
Almighty God, that saveth al mankynde,
Have on Constaunce and on hir child som mynde!
That fallen is in hethen hond eftsone,
In poynt to spille, as I schal telle you soone.
Doun fro the castel comth many a wight,
To gawren on this schip, and on Constaunce;
But schortly fro the castel on a night,
The lordes styward, God yive him meschaunce!

A theef that hadde reneyed oure creaunce,
Com into schip alone, and seyd he scholde
Hir lenman be, whethir sche wold or nolde.
Wo was this wrecched womman tho bigoon,
Hire childe crieth and sche pytously;
But blisful Mary hilp hir right anoon,
For with hir stroglynge wel and mightily
The theef fel over-boord al sodeinly,
And in the see he drenched for vengeaunce,
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Constaunce.
O foule luste, O luxurie, lo thin ende!
Nought oonly that thou feyntest mannes myndc,
But verrayly thou wolt his body schende.
The ende of thyn werk, or of thy lustes blynde,
Is compleynyng; how many may men fynde,
That nought for werk som tyme, but for thentent
To doon his synne, ben eyther slayn or schent!
How may this weyke womman han the strengthe
Hir to defende ayein the renegat?
O Golias, unmesurable of lengthe,
How mighte David make the so mate?
So yong, and of armure so desolate,
How dorst he loke upon thyn dredful face?
Wel may men seyn, it nas but Goddes grace.
Who yaf Judith corage or hardynesse
To slen him Olefernes in his tent,
And to delyveren out *of* wreechednes
The peple of God? I say in this entente,
That right as God spiryte *and* vigor sente
To hem, and saved hem out of meschaunce,
So sent he might and vigor to Constaunce.
Forth goth hir schip thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubalter and Septé, dryvyng *alway*,

Som tyme west, *and* som tyme north and south,
And som tyme est, ful many a wery *day*;
Til Cristes mooder, blessed be sche ay!
Hath schapen thurgh hir endeles goodnesse
To make an ende of hir hevynesse.

Now let us stynt of Constaunce but a throwe,
And speke we of the Romayn emperour,
That out of Surrye hath by lettres knowe
The slaughter of cristen folk, and deshonour
Doon to his doughter by a fals traytour,
I mene the cursed and wikked sowdenesse,
That at the fest leet slee bothe more and lesse.

For which this emperour hath sent anoon
His senatours, with real ordynaunce,
And other lordes, Got wot, many oon,
On Surriens to take high vengeaunce.
They brenne, sleen, and bringen hem to meschaunce
Ful many a day; but schortly this is thende,
Hom-ward to Rome they schapen hem to wende.

This sanatour repayreth with victorie
To Rome-ward, saylyng ful really,
And mette the schip dryvyng, as seith the story,
In which Constance sitteth ful pitously.
Nothing ne knew he what sche was ne why
Sche was in such aray, sche nolde seye
Of hire astaat, although sche scholde deye.

He bryngeth hir to Rome, and to his wyf
He yaf hir, and hir yonge sone also;
And with the senatour lad*de* sche hir lyf.
Thus can our lady bryngen out of woo
Woful Constaunce and many another moo;
And longe tyme dwellede sche in that place,
In holy werkes, as ever was hir grace.

The senatoures wif hir aunte was,
But for al that sche hir never more:
I wol no lenger taryen in this cas,
But to kyng Alla, which I spak of yore,
That for his wyf wepeth and siketh sore,
I wol retorne, and lete I wol Constaunce
Under the senatoures governaunce.

Kyng Alla, which that had his mooder slayn,
Upon a day fel in such repentaunce,
That, if I schortly telle schal and playn,
To Rome he cometh to receyve his penaunce,
And putte him in the popes ordynaunce
In heigh and lowe, and Jhesu Crist bysoughte,
Foryef his wikked werkes that he wroughte.

The fame anon thurgh Rome toun is born,
How Alla kyng schal come in pilgrymage,
By herberjourz that wenten him biforn,
For which the senatour, as was usage,
Rood him ayein, and many of his lynage,
As wel to schewen his magnificence,
As to doon eny kyng a reverence.

Gret cheere doth this noble senatour
To kyng Alla, and he to him also;
Everich of hem doth other gret honour,
And so bifel, that in a day or two
This senatour is to kyng Alla go
To fest, and schortly if I schal not lye,
Constances sone went in his companye.

Som men wolde seyn at request of Custaunce
This senatour hath lad this child to feste;
I may not telle every circumstaunce,
Be as be may, ther was he atte leste;
But soth it is, right at his modres heste,

Byforn hem alle, duryng the metes space,
The child stood lokyng in the kynges face.
This Alla kyng hath of this child gret wonder,
And to the senatour he seyd anoon,
'Whos is that faire child that stondeth yonder?'
'I not,' quod he, 'by God and by seynt Jon!
A moder he hath, but fader hath he non,
That I of woot:' and schortly in a stounde
He told Alla how that this child was founde.
'But God woot,' quod this senatour also,
'So vertuous a lyver in my lyf
Ne saugh I never, such as sche, nomo
Of worldly womman, mayden, or of wyf;
I dar wel say sche hadde lever a knyf
Thurghout hir brest, than ben a womman wikke,
Ther is no man can bryng hir to that prikke.'
Now was this child as lik unto Custaunce
As possible is a creature to be.
This Alla hath the face in remembraunce
Of dame Custaunce, and thereon mused he,
If that the childes mooder were ought sche
That is his wyf; pryvely he highte,
And sped him fro the table that he mighte.
'Parfay!' thought he, 'fantom is in myn heed;
I ought to deme, of rightful juggement,
That in the salte see my wyf is deed.'
And after-ward he made this argument:
'What woot I, wher Crist hath hider sent
My wyf by see, as wel as he hir sente
To my contré, fro thennes that sche wente?'
And after noon home with the senatour
Goth Alla, for to see this wonder chaunce.
This senatour doth Alla gret honour,

And hastely he sent after Custaunce.
But trusteth wel, hir luste nat to daunce,
Whan that she wiste wherfor was that sonde,
Unnethes on hir feet she mighte stonde.
Whan Alla saugh his wyf, fayre he hir grette,
And wepte, that it was rewthe to se;
For at the firste look he on hir sette
He knew wel verrely that it was she.
And for sorwe, as domb she stant as *a* tre;
So was hire herte schett in hire distresse,
Whan she remembred his unkyndenesse.
Twies she swowned in his owen sighte;
He wept and him excuseth pitously;
'Now God,' quod he, 'and alle his halwes brighte
So wisly on my soule *as* have mercy,
That of youre harm as gulteles am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face,
Elles the feend me feeche out of this place.'
Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne,
Or that here woful herte mighte cesse;
Gret was the pité for to here hem pleyne,
Thurgh whiche playntez gan here wo encresse.
I pray you alle my labour to relesse,
I may not telle al here *woo* unto morwe,
I am so wery for to speke of the sorwe.
But fynally, whan that the soth is wist,
That Alla gilteles was of hir woo,
I trowe an hundred tymes they ben kist,
And such a blys is ther bitwix hem tuo,
That, save the joye that lasteth everemo,
Ther is noon lyk, that eny creature
Hath seyn or schal, whil that the world may dure.
Tho prayde she hir housbond meekely

In the relees of hir *long* pytous pyne,
That he wolde preye hir fader specially,
That of his majesté he wold enclyne
To vouchesauf som tyme with him to dyne.
Sche preyeth him eek, he schulde by no weye
Unto hir fader no word of hir seye.
Som men wolde seye, that hir child Maurice
Doth his message unto the emperour;
But, as I gesse, Alla was nat so nyce,
To him that is so soverayn of honour,
As he that is of Cristes folk the flour,
Sent eny child; but it is best to deeme
He went himsilf, and so it may wel seme.
This emperour hath graunted gentilly
To come to dyner, as he him bysoughte;
As wel rede I, he lokede besily
Upon the child, and on his doughter thoughte.
Alla goth to his in, and as him oughte
Arrayed for this fest in every wyse,
As ferforth as his connyng may suffise.
The morwe cam, and Alla gan him dresse,
And eek his wyf, the emperour for to meete;
And forth they ryde in joye and in gladnesse,
And whan sche saugh hir fader in the streete,
Sche light adoun and falleth him to feete.
'Fader,' quod sche, 'your yonge child Constance
Is now ful clene out of your remembraunce.
'I am your doughter Custaunce,' quod sche,
'That whilom ye have sent unto Surrye;
It am I, fader, that in the salte see
Was put alloon, and dampned for to dye.
Now, goode fader, mercy I you crye,
Send me no more unto noon hethenesse,

But thanke my lord her of his kyndenesse.'
Who can the pytous joye telle al
Bitwix hem thre, sith they be thus i-mette?
But of my tale make an ende I schal;
The day goth fast, I wol no lenger lette.
This glade folk to dyner they ben sette;
In joye and blys at mete I let hem dwelle,
A thousand fold wel more than I can telle.
This child Maurice was siththen emperour
I-maad by the pope, and lyved cristenly,
To Cristes chirche dede he gret honour.
But I let al his story passen by,
Of Custaunce is my tale specially:
In olde Romayn gestes men may fynde
Maurices lyf, I bere it nought in mynde.
This kyng Alla whan he his tyme say,
With his Constaunce, his holy wyf so swete,
To Engelond they come the righte way.
Wher as they lyve in joye and in quyete.
But litel whil it last, I you biheete,
Joy of this world for tyme wol not abyde,
Fro day to night it chaungeth as the tyde.
Who lyved ever in such delyt a day,
That him ne meved eyther his conscience,
Or ire, or talent, or som maner affray,
Envy, or pride, or passioun, or offence?
I ne say but for this ende this sentence,
That litel whil in joye or in plesaunce
Lasteth the blis of Alla with Custaunce.
For deth, that takth of heigh and low his rente,
Whan passed was a yeere, *even* as I gesse,
Out of this worlde kyng Alla he hente,
For whom Custauns hath ful gret hevynesse.

Now let us praye that God his souie blesse!
And dame Custaunce, fynally to say,
Toward the toun of Rome goth hir way.
To Rome is come this nobil creature,
And fynt hir freendes ther bothe hool and sound;
Now is sche skaped al hir aventure.
And whanne sche her fader had i-founde,
Doun on hir knees falleth sche to grounde,
Wepyng for tendirnes in herte blithe
Sche heriede God an hundred thousand sithe.
In vertu and in holy almes-dede
They lyven alle, and never asondre wende;
Til deth departe hem, this lyf they lede.
And far now wel, my tale is at an ende.
Now Jhesu Crist, that of his might may sende
Joy after wo, governe us in his grace,
And keep ous alle that ben in this place.

THE PROLOGE OF THE WYF OF BATHE.

XPERIENS, though noon auctorité
Were in this world, it were ynough for me
To speke of wo that is in mariage;
For, lordyngs, syns I twelf yer was of age,
I thank it God that is eterne on lyve,
Housbondes atte chirch dore I have had fyve,
For I so ofte might have weddid be,
And alle were worthy men in here degré.
But me was taught, nought longe tyme goon is,
That synnes Crist wente never but onys
To weddyng, in the Cane of Galile,
That by the same ensampul taught he me
That I ne weddid schulde be but ones.
Lo, herken such a scharp word for the nones!
Beside a welle Jhesus, God and man,
Spak in reproef of the Samaritan:
'Thou hast y-had fyve housbondes,' quod he;
'And that ilk man, which that now hath the,
Is nought thin housbond;' thus he sayde certayn;
What that he mente therby, I can not sayn.
But that I axe, why the fyfte man
Was nought housbond to the Samaritan?
How many mighte schc have in mariage?
Yit herd I never tellen in myn age
Uppon this noumbre diffinicioun;

Men may divine and glosen up and doun.
But wel I wot, withouten eny lye,
God bad us for to wax and multiplie;
That gentil tixt can I wel understonde.
Ek wel I wot, he sayde, myn housebonde
Schulde lete fader and moder, and folwe me;
But of no noumber mencioun made he,
Of bygamye or of octogomye;
Why schulde men speken of that vilonye?
Lo hier the wise kyng daun Salamon,
I trow he hadde wifes mo than oon,
As wolde God it were leful unto me
To be refreisshed half so oft as he!
Which yift of God had he for alle his wyvys!
No man hath such, that in the world on lyve is.
God wot, this nobil king, as to my wit,
The firste night hadde many a mery fit
With ech of hem, so wel was him on lyve.
I-blessid be God that I have weddid fyve!
Welcome the sixte whan that ever he schal!
For-sothe I nyl not kepe me chast in al;
Whan myn housbond is fro the world i-gon,
Som cristne man schal wedde me anoon,
For than thapostil saith that I am fre
To wedde, a goddis half, wher so it be.
He saith, that to be weddid is no synne;
Bet is to be weddid than to brynne.
What recchith me what folk sayn viloyne
Of schrewid Lameth, or of *his* bigamye?
I wot wel Abram was an holy man,
And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I can,
And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than tuo,
And many another holy man also.

Whan sawe ye in eny maner age
That highe God defendide mariage
By expres word? I pray you tellith me;
Or wher commaunded he virginité?
I wot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
Thapostil, when he spekth of maydenhede,
He sayde, that precept therof had he noon;
Men may counseil a womman to be oon,
But counselyng nys no comaundement;
He put it in our owne juggement.
For hadde God comaundid maydenhede,
Than had he dampnyd weddyng with the dede;
And certes, if ther were no seed i-sowe,
Virginité whereon schuld it growe?
Poul ne dorste not comaunde atte leste
A thing, of which his maister yaf non heste.
The dart is set upon virginité,
Cach who-so may, who rennith best let se.
But this word is not taken of every wight,
But ther as God list yive it of his might.
I wot wel that thapostil was a mayde,
But natheles, though that he wrot or sayde,
He wolde that every wight were such as he,
Al nys but counseil unto virginité.
And for to ben a wyf he gaf me leve,
Of indulgence, so nys it to repreve
To wedde me, if that my make deye,
Withoute excepcioun of bigamye;
Al were it good no womman for to touche,
(He mente in his bed or in his couche)
For peril is bothe fuyr and tow to assemble;
Ye knowe what this ensample wolde resemble.
This is al and som, he holdith virginité

More parfit than weddying in frelté;
(Frelté clepe I, but-if that he and sche
Wolde leden al her lif in chastité).
I graunt it wel, I have noon envye,
Though maidenhede preferre bygamye;
It liketh hem to be clene in body and gost;
Of myn estate I nyl make no bost.
For wel ye wot, a lord in his household
He nath not every vessel ful of gold;
Som ben of tre, and don her lord servise.
God clepeth folk to him in sondry wise,
And every hath of God a propre yifte,
Som this, som that, as him likith to schifte.
Virginité is gret perfeccioun,
And continens eek with gret devocioun;
But Christ, that of perfeccioun is welle,
Bad nought every wight schulde go and selle
Al that he had, and yive it to the pore,
And in such wise folwe him and his fore.
He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfytly,
But, lordyngs, by your leve, that am not I;
I wol bystowe the flour of myn age
In the actes and in the fruytes of mariage.
Tel me also, to what conclusioun
Were membres maad of generacioun,
And *of so parfit* wise, *and why* y-wrought?
Trustith right wel, they were nought maad for nought.
Glose who-so wol, and say bothe up and doun,
That thay were made for purgacioun
Of uryn, and oure bothe thinges smale
Were eek to knowe a femel fro a male;
And for non other cause:—say ye no?

Thexperiens wot wel it is not so.
So that these clerkes ben not with me wrothe,
I say this, that thay makid ben for bothe,
That is to saye, for office and for ease
Of engendrure, ther we God nought displease.
Why schulde men elles in her bokes sette,
That man schal yelde to his wif his dette?
Now wherwith schuld he make his payement,
If he ne used his sely instrument?
Than were thay maad upon a creature
To purge uryn, and eek for engendrure.
But I say not that every wight is holde,
That hath such harneys as I to you tolde,
To gon and usen hem in engendrure;
Than schulde men take of chastité no cure.
Crist was a mayde, and schapen as a man,
And many a seynt, sin that the world bygan,
Yet lyvede thay ever in parfyt chastité.
I nyl envye no virginité.
Let hem be bred of pured whete seed,
And let us wyves eten barly breed.
And yet with barly bred, men telle can,
Oure Lord Jhesu refreisschide many a man.
In such astaat as God hath cleped ous
I wil persever, I am not precious;
In wyfhode I wil use myn instrument
Als frely as my maker hath me it sent.
If I be daungerous, God yive me sorwe,
Myn housbond schal han it at eve and at morwe,
Whan that him list com forth and pay his dette.
An housbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
Which schal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
And have his tribulacioun withal

Upon his fleissch, whil that I am his wyf.
I have the power duryng al my lif
Upon his propre body, and not he;
Right thus thapostil told it unto me.
And bad oure housbondes for to love us wel;
Al this sentence me likith every del.'
Up starte the pardoner, and that anoon;
'Now, dame,' quod he, 'by God and by seint Jon,
Ye ben a noble prechour in this caas.
I was aboute to wedde a wif, allaas!
What? schal I buy it on my fleisch so deere?
Yit had I lever wedde no wyf to yere!'
'Abyd,' quod sche, 'my tale is not bygonne.
Nay, thou schalt drinke of another tonne
Er that I go, schal savere wors than ale.
And whan that I have told the forth my tale
Of tribulacioun in mariage,
Of which I am expert in al myn age,
This is to saye, myself hath ben the whippe,
Than might thou chese whethir thou wilt sippe
Of thilke tonne, that I schal abroche.
Be war of it, er thou to neigh approche.
For I schal telle ensamples mo than ten:
Who-so that nyl be war by other men
By him schal other men corrected be.
The same wordes write*th* Ptholomé,
Rede in his Almagest, and tak it there.'
'Dame, I wolde praye you, if that youre wille were,'
Sayde this pardoner, 'as ye bigan,
Tel forth youre tale, and sparith for no man,
Teche us yonge men of youre practike.'
'Gladly,' quod sche, 'syns it may yow like.
But that I pray to al this companye,

If that I speke after my fantasie,
As taketh nought agreef of that I saye,
For myn entente is nought but to playe.
'Now, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.
As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,
I schal saye soth of housbondes that I hadde,
As thre of hem were goode, and tuo were badde.
Tuo of hem were goode, riche, and olde;
Unnethes mighte thay the statute holde,
In which that thay were bounden unto me;
Ye wot wel what I mene of this pardé!
As help me God, I laugh whan that I thinke,
How pitously on night I made hem swynke,
But, by my fay! I told of it no stoor;
Thay hadde me yive her lond and her tresor,
Me nedith not no lenger doon diligence
To wynne her love or doon hem reverence.
They lovede me so wel, by God above!
That I tolde no deynte of her love.
A wys womman wol bysi hir ever in oon
To gete hir love, there sche hath noon.
But synnes I had hem holly in myn hond,
And synnes thay hadde me yeven al her lond,
What schuld I take keep hem for to please,
But it were for my profyt, or myn ease?
I sette hem so on werke, by my fay!
That many a night they songen weylaway.
The bacoun was nought fet for hem, I trowe,
That som men feeche in Essex at Donmowe.
I governed hem so wel after my lawe,
That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe
To bringe me gaye thinges fro the faire.
Thay were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire;

For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.
Now herkeneth how I bar me proprely.
Ye wise wyves, that can understonde,
Thus scholde ye speke, and bere hem wrong on honde;
For half so boldely can ther no man
Swere and lye as a womman can.
(I say not by wyves that ben wise,
But-if it be whan thay ben mysavise.)
I-wis a wif, if that sche can hir good,
Schal beren him on hond the cow is wood,
And take witnes on hir oughne mayde
Of hire assent; but herkenith how I sayde.
See, olde caynard, is this thin array?
Why is my neghebores wif so gay?
Sche is honoured overal ther sche goth;
I sitte at hom, I have no thrifty cloth.
What dostow at my neighebores hous?
Is sche so fair? what, artow amorous?
What roune ye with hir maydenes? *benedicite,*
Sir olde lecchour, let thi japes be.
And if I have a gossib, or a frend
Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a fend,
If that I walk or play unto his hous.
Thou comest hom as dronken as a mous.
And prechist on thy bench, with evel preef,
Thou saist to me, it is a gret meschief
To wedde a pover womman, for costage;
And if that sche be riche and of parage,
Thanne saist thou, that it is a tormentrie
To suffre hir pride and hir malencolie.
And if that sche be fair, thou verray knave,
Thou saist that every holour wol hir have;

Sche may no while in chastité abyde,
That is assayled thus on eche syde.
Thou saist that som folk desire us for riches,
Som for our schap, and som for our fairnes,
And some, for that sche can synge and daunce,
And some for gentilesse or daliaunce,
Som for hir handes and hir armes smale:
Thus goth al to the devel by thi tale.
Thou saist, men may nought kepe a castel wal,
It may so be biseged over al.
And if sche be foul, thanne thou saist, that sche
Coveitith every man that sche may se;
For, as a spaynel, sche wol on him lepe,
Til that sche fynde som man hire to chepe.
Ne noon so gray a goos goth in the lake,
As sayest thou, wol be withouten make.
And saist, it is an hard thing for to wolde
Thing that no man wol, his willes, holde.
Thus seistow, lorel, whan thou gost to bedde,
And that no wys man nedith for to wedde,
Ne no man that entendith unto hevene.
With wilde thunder dynt and fuyry levene
Mote thi wicked*e* necke be to-broke!
Thou saist, that droppyng hous, and eek smoke,
And chydyng wyves maken men to fle
Out of here oughne hous; a, *benedicite*,
What eylith such an old man for to chyde?
Thou seist, we wyves woln oure vices hide.
Til we ben weddid, and than we wil hem schewe.
Wel may that be a proverbe of a schrewe.
Thou saist, that assen, oxen, and houndes,
Thay ben assayed at divers stoundes,
Basyns, lavours eek, er men hem bye,

Spones, stooles, and al such housbondrie,
Also pottes, clothes, and array;
But folk of wyves maken non assay,
Til thay ben weddid, olde dotard schrewe!
And thanne, saistow, we woln oure vices schewe.
Thou saist also, that it displesith me
But-if that thou wilt praysen my beauté,
And but thou pore alway in my face,
And clepe me faire dame in every place;
And but thou make a fest on thilke day
That I was born, and make me freisch and gay;
And but thou do my norice honoure,
And to my chamberer withinne *my* boure,
And to my fadres folk, and myn allies:
Thus saistow, olde barel ful of lies!
And yit of oure apprentys Jankyn,
For his crisp her, schynyng as gold so fyn,
And for he squiereth me up and doun,
Yet hastow caught a fals suspeccioun;
I nyl him nought, though thou were deed to morwe.
But tel me wherfor hydestow with sorwe
The keyes of thy chist away fro me?
It is my good as wel as thin, pardé.
'What! wenest thou make an ydiot of oure dame?
Now by that lord that cleped is seint Jame,
Thow schalt not bothe, though thou were wood,
Be maister of my body and of my good;
That oon thou schalt forgo maugré thin yen!
What helpeth it on me tenqueren or espien?
I trowe thou woldest lokke me in thy chest.
Thou scholdist say, 'wif, go wher the lest;
Take youre disport; I nyl lieve no talis;

I know yow for a trewe wif, dame Alis.'
We loveth no man, that takith keep or charge
Wher that we goon; we love to be at large.
'Of alle men i-blessed most he be
The wise astrologe daun Ptholomé,
That saith this proverbe in his Almagest:
Of alle men his wisedom is highest,
That rekkith not who hath the world in honde.
By this proverbe thou schalt understonde,
Have thou ynough, what thar the reech or care
How merily that other folkes fare?
For certes, olde dotard, with your leve,
Ye schul have queynte right ynough at eve.
He is to gret a nygard that wol werne
A man to light a candel at his lanterne;
He schal have never the lasse light, pardé.
Have thou ynough, the thar not pleyne the.
'Thou saist also, that if we make us gay
With clothing and with precious array,
That it is peril of our chastité.
And yit, with sorwe, thou most enforce the,
And saye these wordes in thapostles name:
In abyt maad with chastité and schame
Ye wommen schuld apparayle yow, quod he,
And nought with tressed her, and gay perré.
As perles, ne with golde, ne clothis riche.
After thy text, ne after thin rubriche,
I wol nought wirche as moche as a gnat.
Thow saist thus that I was lik a cat;
For who-so wolde senge the cattes skyn,
Than wolde the catte duellen in his in;
And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,
Sche wol not duelle in house half a day,

But forth sche wil, er eny day be dawet,
To schewe hir skyn, and goon a caterwrawet.
This is to say, if I be gay, sir schrewe,
I wol renne aboute, my borel for to schewe.
Sir olde fool, what helpith the to aspien?
Though thou praydest Argus with his hundrid yen
To be my wardecorps, as he can best,
In faith he schulde not kepe me but-if me lest;
Yit couthe I make his berd, though queynte he be.
Thou saydest eek, that ther ben thinges thre,
The whiche thinges troublen al this erthe,
And that no wight may endure the ferthe.
O leve sire schrewe, Jhesu schorte thy lif!
Yit prechestow, and saist, an hateful wif
I-rekened is for oon of these meschaunces.
Ben ther noon other of thy resemblaunces
That ye may liken youre parables unto,
But-if a cely wyf be oon of tho?
Thow likenest wommannes love to helle,
To bareyn lond, ther water may not duelle.
Thou likenest it also to wilde fuyr;
The more it brenneth, the more it hath desir
To consume every thing, that brent wol be.
Thou saist, right as wormes schenden a tre,
Right so a wif schendith hir housebonde;
This knowen tho that ben to wyves bonde.

Lordynges, right thus, as ye han understonde,
Bar I styf myn housebondes on honde,
That thus thay sayde in her dronkenesse;
And al was fals, but that I took witnesse
On Jankyn, and upon my neece also.
O Lord, the peyne I dede hem, and the wo,
Ful gulteles, by Goddes swete pyne;

For as an hors, I couthe bothe bite and whyne;
I couthe pleyne, and yet I was in the gilt,
Or elles I hadde often tyme be spilt.
Who-so first cometh to the mylle, first grynt;
I pleynede first, so was oure werre stynt.
Thay were ful glad to excuse hem ful blyve
Of thing, that thay never agilt in her lyve.
And wenches wold I beren hem on honde,
Whan that for-seek thay mighte unnethes stonde,
Yit tykeled I his herte for that he
Wende I had of him so gret chiereté.
I swor that al my walkyng out a nyghte
Was for to aspie wenches that he dighte.
Under that colour had I many a mirthe.
For al such witte is yeven us of birthe;
Deceipt wepyng, spynnyng, God hath give
To wymmen kyndely whil *that* thay may lyve.
And thus of o thing I avaunte me,
At thende I hadde the best in ech degré,
By sleight or fors, or of som maner thing,
As by continuel murmur or chidyng,
Namly on bedde, hadden thay meschaunce,
Ther wolde I chide, and do hem no plesaunce;
I wold no lenger in the bed abyde,
If that I felt his arm over my syde,
Til he hadde maad his raunsoun unto me,
Than wold I suffre him doon his nyceté.
And therfor every man this tale telle,
Wynne who-so may, for al is for to selle;
With empty hond men may noon haukes lure,
For wynnyng wold I al his lust endure,
And make me a feyned appetyt,
And yit in bacoun had I never delyt;

That made me that ever I wold hem chyde.
For though the pope had*de* seten hem bisyde,
I nold*e* not spare hem at her oughne bord,
For, by my trouthe, I quyt hem word for word.
Als help me verray God omnipotent,
Though I right now schuld*e* make my testament,
I owe hem nought a word, that it nys quitte,
I brought it so aboute by my witte,
That they most*e* yeve it up, as for the best,
Or ellis had*de* we never ben in rest.
For though he loked as a grym lyoun,
Yit schuld he fayle of his conclusioun.
Than wold I say*e*, 'now, goode leefe, tak keep,
How mekly lokith Wilkyn our scheep!
Com ner, my spouse, let me ba thy cheke.
Ye schulde be al pacient and meke,
And have a swete spiced conscience,
Siththen ye preche so of Jopes paciens.
Suffreth alway, syns ye so wel can preche,
And but ye do, certeyn we schul yow teche
That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
On of us tuo mot bowe douteles;
And, siththen man is more resonable
Than womman is, ye moste be suffrable.
What aylith yow thus for to grucche and grone?
Is it for ye wold have my queynt allone?
Why, tak it al; lo, have it every del.
Peter! I schrewe yow but ye love it wel.
For if I wolde selle my *bele chose*,
I couthe walk as freisch as eny rose,
But I wol kepe it for youre owne toth.
Ye ben to blame, by God, I say yow soth!'
Such maner wordes hadde we on honde.

Now wol I speke of my fourth housbonde.
My fourthe housbond was a revelour,
This is to say, he had a paramour,
And I was yong, and ful of ragerie,
Stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye.
Lord! how couthe I daunce to an harpe smale,
And synge y-wys as eny nightyngale,
Whan I had*de* dronke a draught of swete wyn.
Metillius, the foule cherl, the swyn,
That with a staf byraft his wyf hir lyf
For sche drank wyn, though I had*de* ben his wif,
Ne schuld he nought have daunted me fro drink*e*;
And after wyn on Venus most I think*e*,
For al-so siker as cold engendrith hayl,
A likorous mouth most have a licorous tail.
In wymmen vinolent is no defens,
This knowen lecchours by experiens.
But, lord Crist, whan that it remembrith me
Upon my youthe, and on my jolité,
It tikelith me aboute myn herte-roote!
Unto this day it doth myn herte boote,
That I have had my world as in my tyme.
But age, allas! that al wol envenyme,
Hath me bireft my beauté and my pith;
Let go, farwel, the devyl go therwith.
The flour is goon, ther nis no more to telle,
The bran, as I best can, now mot I selle.
But yit to be mery wol I fonde.
Now wol I telle of my fourth housbonde.
I say, I had in herte gret despyt,
That he of eny other had*de* delit;
But he was quit, by God, and by seint Joce;
I made him of the same woode a croce,

Nought of my body in no foul manere,
But certeynly I made folk such chere,
That in his owne grees I made him frie
For anger, and for *verraie* jalousie.
By God, in erthe I was his purgatory,
For which I hope his soule be in glory.
For, God it wot, he sat ful stille and song,
Whan that his scho ful bitterly him wrong.
Ther was no wight, sauf God and he, that wiste
In many wyse how sore I him twiste.
He dyede whan I cam fro Jerusalem,
And lith i-grave under the roode-bem;
Al is his tombe nought so curious
As was the sepulcre of him Darius,
Which that Appellus wroughte so subtily.
It nys but wast to burie him preciously.
Let him farwel, God yive his soule rest,
He is now in his grave and in his chest.

'Now of my fifte housbond wol I telle;
God let his soule never come in helle!
And yet was he to me the moste schrewe,
That fele I on my ribbes alle on rewe,
And ever schal, unto myn endyng day.
But in oure bed he was so freisch and gay,
And therwithal so wel he couthe me glose,
When that he wolde have my *bele chose*,
That, though he had*de* me bete on every boon,
He couthe wynne my love right anoon.
I trowe, I loved him beste, for that he
Was of his love daungerous to me.
We wymmen han, if that I schal nought lye,
In this matier a queynte fantasie.
Wayte, what thyng we maye not lightly have,

Therafter wol we sonnest crie and crave.
Forbeed us thing, and that desire we;
Pres on us fast, and thanne wol we flie.
With daunger outen alle we oure ware:
Greet pres at market makith deer chaffare,
And to greet chep is holden at litel pris:
This knowith every womman that is wys.
My fyfte housbond, God his soule blesse,
Which that I took for love and no richesse,
He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,
And had*de* left scole, and went at hoom to borde
With my gossib, duellyng in our toun:
God have hir soule, hir name was Alisoun.
Sche knew myn herte and my privite
Bet than oure parisch prest, so mot I thee.
To hir bywreyed I my counseil al;
For had*de* myn housbond pissed on a wal,
Or don a thing that schuld have cost his lif,
To hir, and to another worthy wyf,
And to my neece, which I lovede wel.
I wold have told his counseil every del.
And so I did*e* ful ofte, God it woot,
That made his face ofte reed and hoot
For verry schame, and blamyd himself, that he
Had*de* told to me so gret a priveté.
And so byfel that oones in a Lente,
(So ofte tyme to my gossib I wente,
For ever yit I lovede to be gay,
And for to walk in March, Averil, and May
From hous *to hous*, to here sondry talis)
That Jankyn clerk, and my gossib dame Alis,
And I myself, into the feldes wente.
Myn housbond was at Londone al that Lente;

I hadde the bettir leysir for to pleye,
And for to see, and eek for to be seye
Of lusty folk; what wist I wher my grace
Was schapen for to be, or in what place?
Therfore I made my visitaciouns
To vigiles, and to processiouns,
To prechings eek, and to this pilgrimages,
To pleyes *of* miracles, and mariages,
And wered upon my gay scarlet gytes.
These wormes, these moughtes, ne these mytes,
Upon my perel fretith hem never a deel, 56.
And wostow why? for thay were used wel.
Now wol I telle forth what happide me:—
I say, that in the feldes walkide we,
Til trewely we hadde such daliaunce
This clerk and I, that of my purvyaunce
I spak to him, and sayde how that he,
If I were wydow, schulde wedde me.
For certeynly, I say for no bobaunce,
Yit was I never withouten purveyaunce 570
Of mariage, ne of no thinges eeke;
I hold a mouses hert not worth a leek,
That hath but oon hole to sterte to,
And if that faile, than is al i-do.
I bare him on honde he hadde enchauntede me;
(My dame taughte me that subtylté)
And eke I sayde, I mete of him alle nyght,
He wolde have slayne me, as I laye uprighte,
And alle my bedde was fulle of vereye blode;
Butte yette I hope that ye shulle do me gode; 580
For blode betokenethe golde, as me was taughte;
And alle was false, I dremede of hitt righte naughte,
Butte as I followede ay my dames lore,

As welle of that as of other thinges more.
But now, sir, let me se, what I schal sayn;
A ha! by God, I have my tale agayn.
'Whan that my fourthe housbond was on bere,
I wept algate and made a sory cheere,
As wyves mooten, for it is usage;
And with my kerchief coverede my visage;
But, for that I was purveyed of a make,
I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.
To chirche was myn housbond brought on morwe
With neighebors that for him made sorwe,
And Jankyn oure clerk was oon of tho.
As help me God, whan that I saugh him go
After the beere, me thought he had a paire
Of legges and of feet so clene and faire,
That al myn hert I yaf unto his hold.
He was, I trowe, twenty wynter old,
And I was fourty, if I schal say the sothe,
But yit I had alway a coltis tothe.
Gattothid I was, and that bycom me wel,
I had*de* the prynte of seynt Venus sel.
As helpe me God, I was a lusti one.
And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel begone:
And trewly, as myn hosbonde tolde me,
I hadde the beste quoniam that myghte be.
For certis I am al fulli venerian
In felyng, and myn herte alle marcian:
Venus me yaf my lust and licorousnesse.
And Mars yaf me my sturdi hardynesse.
Myn ascent was Taur, and Mars therinne;
Allas, alas, that ever love was synne!
I folwed ay myn inclinacioun
By vertu of my constillacioun:

That made me that I couthe nought withdrawe
My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
Yet have I a marke of Mars uppon my face,
And also in another pryvé place.
For God so wisse be my salvacion,
I lovyde nevyr bi non discrescion,
But evyr folewed myn owne appetite,
Alle were he schort, long, blak, or white;
I toke no kepe, so that he liked me,
How pore he was, ne eke of what degre.
What schuld I say? but at the monthis ende
This joly clerk Jankyn, that was so heende,
Hath weddid me with gret solempnitee,
And to him yaf I al the londe and fee
That ever was me yive therbifore.
But aftir-ward repentede me ful sore.
He nolde suffre nothing of my list.
By God, he smot me oones with his fist,
For I rent oones out of his book a lef,
That of that strok myn eere wax al deef.
Styborn I was, as is a leones,
And of my tonge a verray jangleres,
And walk I wold, as I hadde don biforn,
Fro hous to hous, although he had it sworn;
For which he ofte tymes wolde preche,
And me of olde Romayn gestes teche.
How he Simplicius Gallus left his wyf,
And hir forsok for terme of al his lyf,
Nought but for open heedid he hir say
Lokying out at his dore upon a day.
Another Romayn told he me by name,
That, for his wyf was at a somer game
Without his wityng, he forsok hir eeke.

And thanne wold he upon his book seeke
That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste,
Wher he comaundith, and forbedith faste,
Man schal not suffre his wyf go roule aboute.
Than wold he saye right thus withouten doute:
'Who that buyldith his hous al of salwes,
And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,
And suffrith his wyf to go seken halwes,
Is worthy to ben honged on the galwes.'
But al for nought; I sette nought an hawe
Of his proverbe, ne of his olde sawe;
Ne I wolde not of him corretted be.
I hate him that my vices tellith me,
And so doon mo, God it wot, than I.
This made him with me wood al outerly;
I nolde not forbere him in no cas.
Now wol I saye yow soth, by seint *Thomas*,
Why that I rent out of the book a leef,
For which he smot me, that I was al def.
He had a book, that gladly night and day
For his desport he wolde rede alway;
He clepyd it Valerye and Theofraste,
At which book he lough alway ful faste.
And eek thay say her was som tyme a clerk at Rome,
A cardynal, that heet seint Jerome,
That made a book ayens Jovynyan.
In which book eek ther was Tertulyan,
Crisippus, Tortula, and eek Helewys,
That was abbas not fer fro Paris;
And eek the parablis of Salamon,
Ovydes Art, and bourdes many oon;
And alle these were bounde in oo volume.
And every night and day was his custume,
Whan he hadde leysir and vacacioun

From other wor*ldely* occupacioun,
To reden in this book of wikked wyves.
He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves,
Than ben of goode wyves in the Bible.
For trustith wel, it is an inpossible,
That any clerk schal speke good of wyves,
But-if it be of holy seintes lyves,
Ne of noon other wyfes never the mo.
Who peyntide the leoun, tel me, who?
By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
As clerkes have withinne her oratories,
Thay wold have write of men more wickidnes,
Than al the mark of Adam may redres.
These children of Mercury and of Venus
Ben in her werkyng ful contrarious.
Mercury lovith wisdom and science,
And Venus loveth ryot and dispense.
And for her divers disposicioun,
Ech fallith in otheres exaltacioun.
And thus, God wot, Mercury is desolate
In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltate,
And Venus faylith wher Mercury is reysed.
Therfor no womman of clerkes is preised.
The clerk whan he is old, and may nought do
Of Venus werkis, is not worth a scho;
Than sit he doun, and writ in his dotage,
That wommen can nought kepe here mariage.
But now to purpos, why I tolde the,
That I was beten for a leef, pardé.
Upon a night Jankyn, that was oure sire,
Rad on his book, as he sat by the fyre,
Of Eva first, that for hir wikkidnes,
Was al mankynde brought to wrecchednes,
For whiche that Jhesu Crist himselfe was slayne,

That boughte us with his herte-blood agayne.
Lo here expresse of wommen may ye fynde,
That woman was the loose of alle mankynde.
Tho rad he me how Sampson lest his heris
Slepyng, his lemman kut it with hir scheris,
Thurgh which tresoun lost he bothe his yen.
Tho rad he me, if that I schal not lyen,
Of Ercules, and of his Dejanyre,
That caused him to sette himself on fuyre.
No thing foryat he the care and wo
That Socrates hadde with his wyves tuo;
How Exantipa caste pisse upon his heed.
This seely man sat stille, as he were deed,
He wyped his heed, no more durst he sayn,
But 'Er thunder stynte ther cometh rayn.'
Of Phasipha, that was the queen *of* Creete,
For schrewednes him thoughte the tale sweete.
Fy! spek no more, it is a grisly thing,
Of her horribil lust and her likyng.
Of Clydemystra for hir leccherie
That falsly made hir housbond for to dye,
He rad it with ful good devocioun.
He tolde me eek, for what occasioun
Amphiores at Thebes lest his lif;
Myn housbond had a legend of his *wyf*
Exiphilem, that for an ouche of gold
Hath prively unto the Grekes told
Wher that hir housbond hyd him in a place,
For which he had at Thebes sory grace.
Of Lyma told he me, and of Lucye;
Thay bothe made her housbondes for to dye,
That oon for love, that other was for hate.
Lyma hir housbond on an even late

Empoysond hath, for that sche was his fo;
Lucia licorous loved hir housbond so,
For that he schuld alway upon hir thinke,
Sche yaf him such a maner love-drinke,
That he was deed er it was by the morwe;
And thus algates housbondes hadde sorwe.
Than told he me, how oon Latumyus
Compleigned unto his felaw Arrius,
That in his gardyn growede such a tre,
On which he sayde how that his wyves thre
Honged hemselfe for herte despitous.
'O leve brother,' quod this Arrious,
'Yif me a plont of thilke blessid tre,
And in my gardyn schal it plantid be.'
Of latter date of wyves hath he red
That some han slayn her housbondes in her bed,
And let her lecchour dighten al the night,
Whil that the corps lay in the flor upright;
And som han dryven nayles in her brayn,
Whiles thay sleepe, and thus they han hem slayn;
Som have hem yive poysoun in her drinke;
He spak more harm than herte may bythynke.
And therwithal he knew mo proverbes
Than in this world ther growen gres or herbes.
Better is, quod he, thyn habitacioun
Be with a leoun, or a foul dragoun,
Than with a womman using for to chyde.
Better is, quod he, hihe in the roof abyde,
Than with an *angry* womman doun in a hous;
Thay ben so wicked and so contrarious,
Thay haten that her housbondes loven ay.
He sayd, a womman cast hir schame away,
Whan sche cast of hir smok; and forthermo,

A fair womman, but sche be chast also,
Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.
Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose
The wo that in myn herte was and pyne?
And whan I saugh he nolde never fyne
To reden on this cursed book al night,
Al sodeinly thre leves have I plight
Out of this booke that he had, and eeke
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke,
That in oure fuyr he fel bak-ward adoun.
And he upstert, as doth a wood leoun,
And with his fist he smot me on the hed,
That in the floor I lay as I were deed.
And whan he saugh so stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wold have fled away.
Til atte last out of my swown I brayde.
'O, hastow slayn me, false thef?' I sayde,
'And for my lond thus hastow mourdrid me?
Er I be deed, yit wol I kisse the.'
And ner he cam, and knelith faire adoun,
And sayde, 'Deere suster Alisoun,
As help me God, I schal the never smyte;
That I have doon it is thiself to wite;
Foryive it me, and that I the biseke.'
And yet eftsones I hyt him on the cheke,
And sayde, 'Thef, thus mekil I me wreke.
Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'
But atte last, with mochil care and wo,
We fyl accordid by ourselven tuo;
He yaf me al the bridil in myn hand
To have the governaunce of hous and land,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also,
And made him brenne his book anoon right tho.

And whan I hadde geten unto me
By maistry al the sovereynete,
And that he sayde, 'Myn owne trewe wyf,
Do as the list in term of al thy lyf,
Kepe thyn honour, and kep eek my myn estat;'
And after that day we never hadde debat.
God help me so, I was to him as kynde
As eny wyf fro Denmark unto Inde,
And al-so trewe was he unto me.
I pray to God that sitte in mageste
So blesse his soule, for his mercy deere.
Now wol I say my tale, if ye wol heere.'
The Frere lough when he had herd al this:
'Now, dame,' quod he, 'so have I joye and blis,
This a long preambel of a tale.'
And whan the Sompnour herd the Frere gale,
'Lo!' quod this Sompnour, 'for Goddes armes two,
A frer wol entremet him evermo.
Lo, goode men, a flie and eek a frere
Wol falle in every dissche and matiere.
What spekst thou of perambulacioun?
What? ambil, or trot; or pees, or go sit doun:
Thou lettest oure disport in this matere.'
'Ye, woltow so, sir sompnour!' quod the Frere:
'Now, by my fay, I schal, er that I go,
Telle of a sompnour such a tale or two,
That alle the folk schuln laughen in this place.'
'Now, ellis, frere, I byschrew thy face,'
Quod this Sompnour, 'and I byschrewe me,
But-if I telle tales two or thre
Of freres, er I come to Sydingborne,
That I schal make thin herte for to morne,
For wel I wot thy paciens is goon.'

Oure Hoste cride. 'Pees, and that anoon;' 850
And sayde, 'Let the womman telle hir tale.
Ye fare as folkes that dronken ben of ale.
Do, dame, tel forth your tale, and that is best.
'Al redy, sir,' quod sche, 'right as you lest,
If I have licence of this worthy frere.'
'Yis, dame,' quod he, 'tel forth, and I schal heere.'

THE WYF OF BATHES TALE.

IN olde dayes of the kyng Arthour,
Of which that Britouns speken gret honour,
Al was this lond fulfilled of fayrie;
The elf-queen, with hir joly compaignye,
Dauncede ful oft in many a grene mede.
This was the old oppynyoun, as I rede;
I speke of many hundrid yer ago;
But now can no man see noon elves mo.
For now the grete charité and prayeres
Of lymytours and other holy freres, 10
That sechen every lond and every streem,
As thik as motis in the sonne-beem,
Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, and boures,
Citees, burghes, castels hihe and toures,
Thropes, bernes, shepnes and dayeries,
That makith that ther ben no fayeries.
For ther as wont was to walken an elf,
Ther walkith noon but the lymytour himself,
In undermeles and in morwenynges,

And saith his matyns and his holy thinges
As he goth in his lymytatioun.
Wommen may *now* go saufly up and doun,
In every bussch, or under every tre,
Ther is non other incub*us* but he,
And he ne wol doon hem *no* dishonour.
And so bifel it, that this king Arthour
Had in his hous a lusty bacheler,
That on a day com rydyng fro ryver;
And happed, al alone as sche was born,
He saugh a mayde walkyng him byforn.
Of which mayden anoon, maugré hir heed,
By verray fors byraft hir maydenhed.
For which oppressioun was such clamour,
And such pursuyte unto kyng Arthour,
That dampned was the knight and schulde be ded
By cours of lawe, and schuld have lost his heed,
(Paraventure such was the statut tho,)
But that the queen and other ladys mo
So longe preyeden thay the kyng of grace,
Til he his lif hath graunted in the place,
And yaf him to the queen, al at hir wille
To chese wethir sche wolde him save or spille.
The queen thankede the kyng with al hir might;
And after thus sche spak unto the knight,
Whan that sche saugh hir tyme upon a day:
'Thow stondest yet,' quod sche, 'in such array,
That of thy lyf hastow no sewerté;
I graunte thy lif, if thou canst telle me,
What thing is it that wommen most desiren;
Be war, and keep thy nek-bon fro the iren.
And if thou canst not tellen it anoon,
Yet wol I yive the leve for to goon

A twelfmonth and a day, it for to lere
An answer suffisaunt in this matiere.
And seurté wol I have, er that thou pace,
Thy body for to yelden in this place.'
Wo was this knight, and sorwfully he sikede;
But what? he may not doon al as him likede,
And atte last he ches him for to wende,
And cam ayein right at the yeres ende
With swich answer as God him wolde purveye;
And takith his leve, and wendith forth his weye.
He sekith every hous and every place
Wher-so he hopith for to fynde grace,
To lerne what thing wommen loven most;
But he ne couthe arryven in no cost,
Wher as he mighte fynde in this mattiere
Two creatures accordyng in fere.
Some sayden, wommen loven best richesse,
Some sayde honour, and some sayde jolynesse,
Some riche array, some sayden lust on bedde,
And ofte tyme to be wydow and wedde.
Some sayden owre herte is most i-eased
Whan we ben y-flaterid and y-pleased
He goth ful neigh the soth, I wil not lye;
A man schal wynne us best with flaterye;
And with attendaunce, and with busynesse
Ben we y-limid both more and lesse.'
And some sayen, that we loven best
For to be fre, and to doon as us lest,
And that no man repreve us of oure vice,
But say that we ben wys, and no thing nyce.
For trewely ther is noon of us alle,
If eny wight wolde claw us on the galle,
That we nyl like, for he saith us soth;

Assay, and he schal fynd it, that so doth.
For be we never so vicious withinne,
We schuln be holde wys and clene of synne.
And somme sayn, that gret delit han we
For to be holden stabil and secre,
And in oon purpos stedfastly to duelle,
And nought bywreye thing that men us telle.
But that tale is not worth a rakes stele.
Pardy, we wymmen can right no thing hele,
Witnes on Myda; wil ye here the tale?
Ovyd, among his other thinges smale,
Sayde Myda had under his lange heris
Growyng upon his heed tuo asses eeris;
The whiche vice he hid, as he best mighte,
Ful subtilly fro every mannes sighte,
That, save his wyf, ther wist of that nomo;
He loved hir most, and trusted hir also;
He prayed hir, that to no creature
Sche schulde tellen of his disfigure.
Sche swor him, nay, for al this world to wynne,
Sche nolde do that vilonye or synne
To make hir housbond have so foul a name;
Sche wolde not tel it for hir oughne schame.
But natheles hir thoughte that sche dyde,
That sche so longe a counseil scholde hyde:
Hir thought it swal so sore about hir herte,
That needely som word hir most asterte;
And sins sche dorste not tel it unto man,
Doun to a marreys faste by sche ran,
Til sche cam ther, hir herte was on fuyre;
And as a bytoure bumblith in the myre,
Sche layde hir mouth unto the water doun.
'Bywrey me not, thou watir, with thi soun.'

Quod sche, 'to the I telle it, and nomo,
Myn housbond hath long asse eeris tuo.
Now is myn hert al hool, now is it oute,
I mighte no lenger kepe it out of doute.'
Her may ye se, theigh we a tyme abyde,
Yet out it moot, we can no counseil hyde.
The remenaunt of the tale, if ye wil here,
Redith Ovid, and ther ye mow it leere.

This knight, of which my tale is specially,
Whan that he saugh he mighte nought come therby,
This is to saye, that wommen loven most,
Withinne his brest ful sorwful was the gost.
But hom he goth, he mighte not lenger sojourne,
The day was come, that hom-ward most he torne.
And in his way, it hapnyd him to ride
In al his care, under a forest side,
Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go
Of ladys four and twenty, and yit mo.
Toward this ilke daunce he drough ful yerne,
In hope that *he* som wisdom schuld i-lerne;
But certeynly, er he com fully there,
Vanysshid was this daunce, he nyste where;
No creature saugh he that bar lif,
Sauf on the greene he saugh sittyng a wyf,
A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.
Ayens the knight this olde wyf gan ryse,
And sayde, 'Sir knight, heer forth lith no way;
Tel me what ye seekyn, by your fay
Paradventure it may the better be:
Thise olde folk can mochil thing,' quod sche,
'My lieve modir,' quod this knight, 'certayn
I am but ded but-if that I can sayn
What thing is it that wommen most desire;

Couthe ye me wisse, I wolde wel quyte your huyre.'
'Plight me thy trouth her in myn hond,' quod sche,
'The nexte thing that I require the,
Thou schalt it doo, if it be in thy might,
And I wol telle it the, er it be night.'
'Have her my trouthe,' quod the knight, 'I graunte.'
'Thanne,' quod sche, 'I dar me wel avaunte,
Thy lif is sauf, for I wol stonde therby,
Upon my lif the queen wol say as I;
Let se, which is the proudest of hem alle,
That werith on a coverchief or a calle,
That dar saye nay of thing I schal the teche.
Let us go forth withouten more speche.'
Tho rownede sche a pistil in his eere,
And bad him to be glad, and have no fere.
Whan they ben comen to the court, this knight
Sayd he had holde *his* day, *as* he *hadde* hight,
Al redy was his answer, as he sayde.
Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,
And many a wydow, for that they ben wyse,
The queen hirself sittyng as a justise,
Assemblid ben, his answer for to hiere;
And after-ward this knight was bode appiere,
To every wight comaundid was silence,
And that the knight schulde telle in audience
What thing that worldly wommen loven best.
This knight ne stood not stille, as doth a best,
But to the questioun anoon answerde,
With manly voys, that al the court it herde;
'My liege lady, generally,' quod he,
'Wommen desiren to have soveraynté
As wel over hir housbond as over hir love,
And for to be in maystry him above.

This is the most desir, though ye me kille;
Doth as yow list, I am heer at your wille.'
In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,
Ne wydow, that contrariede that he sayde;
But sayden, he was worthy have his lif.
And with that word upstarte that olde wif,
Which that the knight saugh sittyng on the grene.
'Mercy,' quod sche, 'my soveraign lady queene,
Er that your court departe, doth me right.
I taughte this answer unto the knight;
For which he plighte me his trouthe there,
The firste thing that I wold him requere,
He wold it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court then pray I the, sir knight,'
Quod sche, 'that thou me take unto thy wif,
For wel thou wost, that I have kept thy lif;
If I say fals, sey nay, upon thy fey.'
This knight answerd, 'Allas and waylawey!
I wot right wel that such was my byhest.
For Goddes love, as chese a *new* request;
Tak al my good, and let my body go.'
'Nay,' quod sche than, 'I schrew us bothe tuo.
For though that I be foule, old, and poure,
I nolde for al the metal ne for the oure
That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
But I thy wife were and eek thy love.'
'My love?' quod he, 'nay, nay, my dampnacioun.
Allas! that eny of my nacioun
Schuld ever so foule disparagid be!'
But al for nought; the ende is this, that he
Constreigned was, he needes most hir wedde,
And takith his wyf, and goth with hir to bedde.

Now wolden som men say paradventure,

That for my necgligence I do no cure
To telle yow the joye and tharray
That at that fest was maad that ilke day.
To which thing schortly answeren I schal,
And say ther nas feste ne joy at al,
Ther nas but hevynes and mochil sorwe;
For prively he weddyd hir in a morwe,
And alday hudde him as doth an oule,
So wo was him, his wyf lokede so foule.
Gret was the wo the knight had in his thought
Whan he was with his wyf on bedde brought,
He walwith, and he torneth to and fro.
His olde wyf lay smylyng ever mo,
And sayd, 'O deere housbond, *benedicite*,
Fareth every knight with his wyf as ye!
Is this the lawe of king Arthures hous?
Is every knight of his thus daungerous?
I am your oughne love, and eek your wyf,
I am sche that hath savyd your lyf,
And certes ne dede I yow never unright.
Why fare ye thus with me the firste night?
Ye fare lik a man that hadde lest his wit.
What is my gult? for Godes love, tel me it,
And it schal be amendid, if that I may.'
'Amendid!' quod this knight, 'allas! nay, nay,
It wol nought ben amendid, never mo;
Thow art so lothly, and so old also,
And therto comen of so lowh a kynde,
That litil wonder is though I walwe and wynde;
So wolde God, myn herte wolde breste!'
'Is this,' quod sche, 'the cause of your unreste?'
'Ye, certeynly,' quod he, 'no wonder is!'
'Now, sire,' quod sche, 'I couthe amende al this,

If that me list, er it were dayes thre,
So wel ye mighte bere yow to me.
But for ye speken of such gentilesse
As is descendit out of old richesse,
Therfor schulde ye ben holden gentil men;
Such arrogaunce is not worth an hen.
Lok who that is most vertuous alway,
Privé and pert, and most entendith ay
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
Tak him for the grettest gentil man.
Crist wol we clayme of him oure gentilesse,
Nought of oure eldres for *her olde* richesse.
For though they yive us al her heritage,
For which we clayme to be of high parage,
Yit may thay not biquethe, for no thing
To noon of us, so vertuous lyvyng,
That made hem gentil men y-callid be,
And bad us folwe hem in such degré.
Wel can the wyse poet of Florence,
That hatte Daunt, speke of this sentence;
Lo, in such maner of rym is Dauntes tale;
Ful seeld uprisith by his braunchis smale
Prowes of man, for God of his prowesse
Wol that we clayme of him our gentilesse;
For of our auncestres we no thing clayme
But temporal thing, that men may hurt and mayme.
Ek every wight wot this as wel as I,
If gentiles were plaunted naturelly
Unto a certayn lignage doun the line,
Privé ne apert, they wolde never fine
To don of gentilesce the fair office,
Thay mighte nought doon no vileny or vice.

Take fuyr and ber it in the derkest hous
Bitwixe this and the mount Caukasous,
And let men shitte the dores, and go thenne,
Yit wol the fuyr as fair and lighte brenne
As twenty thousand men might it biholde;
His office naturel ay wol it holde,
Up peril on my lif, til that it dye.
Her may ye se wel, how that genterye
Is nought annexid to possessioun,
Sithins folk ne doon her operacioun
Alway, as doth the fuyr, lo, in his kynde
For God it wot, men may ful often fynde
A lordes sone do schame and vilonye.
And he that wol have pris of his gentrie,
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And had his eldres noble and vertuous,
And nyl himselve doo no gentil dedis,
Ne folw his gentil aunceter, that deed is,
He is nought gentil, be he duk or erl;
For vileyn synful deedes maketh a cherl,
For gentilnesse nys but renomé
Of thin auncestres, for her heigh bounté,
Which is a straunge thing to thy persone;
Thy gentilesce cometh fro God alloone.
Than comth oure verray gentilesse of grace,
It was no thing biquethe us with oure place.
Thinketh how nobil, as saith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,
That out of povert ros to high noblesse.
Redith Senek, and redith eek Boece,
Ther schuln ye se expresse, that no dred is,
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.
And therfor, lieve housbond, I conclude,

Al were it that myn auncetres wer rude,
Yit may the highe God, and so hope I,
Graunte me grace to lyve vertuously;
Than am I gentil, whan that I bygynne
To lyve vertuously, and weyven synne.
And ther as ye of povert me repreve,
The heighe God, on whom that we bilieve,
In wilful povert ches to *lede* his lif;
And certes, every man, mayden, or wyf,
May understonde that Jhesus, heven king,
Ne wolde not chese a vicious lyvyng.
Glad povert is an honest thing certayn;
This wol Senek and other clerkes sayn.
Who that holt him payd of his povert,
I hold him riche, al had he nought a schert.
He that coveitith is a pore wight,
For he wold have that is not in his might.
But he that nought hath, ne coveyteth nought to have,
Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave;
Verray povert is synne proprely.
'Juvenal saith of povert merily,
The pore man whan he goth by the waye
Bifore the theves he may synge and playe.
Povert is hatel *good*, and, as I gesse,
A ful gret brynger out of busynesse;
A gret amender eek of sapiens
To him that takith it in paciens.
Povert is this, although it seme elenge,
Possessioun that no wight wil chalenge.
Povert, ful often, whan a man is lowe,
Makith him his God and eek himself to knowe.
Povert a spectacle is, as thinkith me,

Thurgh which he may his verray frendes se;
And therfor, sir, syth that I yow nought greve,
Of my povert no more ye me repreve.
'Now, sir, of elde ye repreve me;
And certes, sir, though noon auctorité
Were in no book, ye gentils of honour
Sayn that men schuld an old wight doon favour,
And clepe him fader, for your gentilesse;
And *auctours* I schal fynden, as I gesse.
'Now ther that ye sayn I am foul and old,
Than drede you nought to ben a cokewold.
For filthe and elde, al-so mot I the,
Ben grete wardeyns upon chastité.
But natheles, sith I knowe your delyt,
I schal fulfille youre worldly appetyt.
Chese, now,' quod sche, 'oon of these thinges tweye,
To have me foul and old til that I deye,
And be to yow a trewe *and* humble wyf,
And never yow displease in al my lyf;
Or elles ye wol have me yong and fair,
And take your aventure of the repair
That schal be to your hous bycause of me,
Or in som other place *it* may wel be.
Now chese yourselven whethir that yow liketh.'
This knight avysith him, and sore sikith,
But atte last he sayd in this manere:
'My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,
I putte me in your wyse governaunce,
Chesith yourself which may be most pleasaunce
And most honour to yow and me also,
I do no fors the whether of the tuo,
For as yow likith, it suffisith me.'
'Than have I gete of yow the maystry,' quod sche,

'Sith I may govern and chese as me list?'
'Ye certis, wyf,' quod he, 'I hold it best.'
'Kys me,' quod sche, 'we ben no lenger wrothe,
For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe,
That is to saye, ye, bothe fair and good.
I pray to God that I mot sterve wood;
But I be to yow al-so good and trewe
As ever was wyf, sithithen the world was newe;
And but I be to morow as fair to seen
As eny lady, emperesse, or queen,
That is bitwixe thest and eek the west,
Doth by my lyf right even as you lest.
Cast up the cortyns, and look what this is.'
And whan the knyght saugh verrayly al this,
That sche so fair was, and so yong therto,
For joye he hent hir in his armes tuo;
His herte bathid in a bath of blisse,
A thousand tyme on rowe he gan hir kisse.
And sche obeyed him in every thing
That mighte doon him pleisauns or likyng.
And thus thay lyve unto her lyves end
In parfyt joye; and Jhesu Crist us sende
Housbondes meke, yonge, and freissche on bedde,
And grace to overbyde hem that we wedde.
And eek I pray to Jhesus schort her lyves,
That wil nought be governed after her wyves.
And old and angry nygardes of despense,
God send hem sone verray pestilence!

THE PROLOGE OF THE FRERE.

THIS worthy lymytour, this noble Frere,
He made alway a *maner* lourynge cheere
Upon the Sompnour, but for honesté
No vileyns worde yit to him spak he.
But atte last he sayd unto the wyf,
'Dame,' quod he, 'God yive yow good lyf!
Ye han her touchid, al-so mot I the,
In scole matier gret difficulté.
Ye han sayd mochel thing right wel, I say;
But dame, right as we ryden by the way,
Us needeth nought but for to speke of game,
And lete auctorites, in Goddes name,
To preching and to scoles of clergie.
But if it like to this companye,
I wil yow of a sompnour telle a game;
Pardé, ye may wel knowe by the name,
That of a sompnour may no good be sayd;
I pray that noon of yow be evel apayd;
A sompnour is a renner up and doun
With maundementz for fornicacioun,
And is y-bete at every tounes eende.'
Our oste spak, 'A! sir, ye scholde been heende
And curteys, as a man of your estaat,
In company we wol have no debaat;
Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be.'
'Nay,' quoth the Sompnour, 'let him saye to me
What so him list; whan it cometh to my lot,
By God! I schal him quyten every grot.

I schal him telle which a gret honour
Is to ben a fals flateryng lymytour.
And his offis I schal him telle i-wis.'
Our host answerde, '*Pees, no more of* this.'
And after this he sayd unto the Frere,
'Telleth forth your tale, my *leve* maister deere.'

THE FRERES TALE.

WHILOM there was dwellyng in my countré
An erchedeken, a man of gret degré,
That boldely did execucioun,
In punyschyng of fornicacioun,
Of wicchecraft, and eek of bauderye,
Of diffamacioun, and avoutrie,
Of chirche-reves, and of testamentes,
Of contractes, and of lak of sacraments,
And eek of many another *maner* cryme,
Which needith not to reherse at this tyme;
Of usur, and of symony also;
But certes lecchours did he grettest woo:
Thay schulde synge, if that they were hent;
And smale tythers thay were fouly schent,
If eny persoun wold upon hem pleyne,
Ther might astert him no pecunial peyne.
For smale tythes and for smal offrynge,
He made the poeple pitously to synge.
For er the bisschop caught hem in his hook,
They weren in the archedeknes book:
And hadde thurgh his juredicciouu

Power to have of hem correccioun.
He had a sompnour redy to his hond,
A slyer boy was noon in Engelond;
Ful prively he had his espiaile,
That taughte him wher he might avayle.
He couthe spare of lecchours oon or tuo,
To techen him to four and twenty mo.
For though this sompnour wood were as an hare,
To telle his harlotry I wol not spare;
For we ben out of here correccioun,
They have of us no juredicioun,
Ne never schul to terme of alle her lyves.
'Peter! so been the wommen of the styves.'
Quod this Sompnour, 'i-put out of oure cures.'
'Pees! with meschaunce and with mesaventures,'
Thus sayd our host, 'and let him telle his tale.
Now telleth forth, although the Sompnour gale,
Ne spareth nought, myn owne maister deere.'
This false theef, the sompnour, quoth the frere,
Had alway bawdes redy to his hond,
As eny hauk to lure in Engelond,
That told him al the secré that they knewe,
For here acqueintaunce was not come of newe;
Thay were his approwours prively.
He took himself a gret profyt therby;
His maister knew nat alway what he wan.
Withoute maundement, a lewed man
He couthe sompne, up peyne of Cristes curs,
And thay were glad to fille wel his purs,
And make him grete festis atte nale.
And right as Judas hadde purses smale
And was a theef, right such a theef was he,
His maister had*de* not half his dueté;

He was (if I schal yive him his laude)
A theef, a sompnour, and eek a baude.
And he hadde wenches at his retenue,
That whethir that sir Robert or sir Hughe,
Or Jak, or Rauf, or who-so that it were,
That lay by hem, thay told it in his eere.
Thus was the wenche and he of oon assent.
And he wolde fecche a feyned maundement,
And sompne hem to chapitre bothe tuo,
And pyle the man, and let the wenche go.
Than wold he sayn, 'I schal, frend, for thy sake,
Don strike the out of oure lettres blake;
The thar no more as in this cas travayle;
I am thy frend ther I the may avayle.'
Certeynly he knew of bribours mo
Than possible is to telle in yeres tuo;
For in this world nys dogge for the bowe,
That can an hurt deer from an hol y-knowe,
Bet than this sompnour knew a leccheour,
Or avoutier, or ellis a paramour;
And for that was the fruyt of al his rent,
Therfore, theron he set al his entent.
And so bifel, that oones on a day
This sompnour, ever wayting on his pray,
Rod forth to sompne a widew, an old ribibe,
Feynyng a cause, for he wolde *han* a bribe.
And happede that he say bifore him ryde
A gay yeman under a forest syde;
A bow he bar, and arwes bright and kene,
He had upon a courtepy of grene,
An hat upon his heed, with frenges blake.
'Sir,' quod this sompnour, 'heyl and wel overtake!'
'Welcome,' quod he, 'and every good felawe;

Whider ridestow under this grene schawe?'
Sayde this yiman, 'Wiltow fer to day?'
This sompnour answerd, and sayde, 'Nay
Her faste by,' quod he, 'is myn entent
To ryden, for to reysen up a rent
That longith to my lordes dueté.'
'Artow than a bayely?' 'Ye,' quod he.
He durste not for verray filth and schame
Sayn that he was a sompnour, for the name.
'*De par dieux!*' quod the yeman, 'lieve brother,
Thou art a bayly and I am another.
I am unknowen, as in this contré;
Of thin acqueintance I wol praye the,
And eek of brotherheed, *if* it yow lest.
I have gold and silver in my chest;
If that the happe come into oure schire,
Al schal be thin, right as thou wolt desire.'
'*Graunt mercy*,' quod this sompnour, 'by my faith!'
Everich in otheres hond his trouthe laith,
For to be sworne bretheren til thay deyen.
In daliaunce forth thay ride and pleyen.
This sompnour, which that was as ful of jangles,
As ful of venym ben these weryangles,
And ever enquering upon every thing,
'Brother,' quod he, 'wher now is your dwellyng,
Another day if that I schulde yow seeche?'
This yiman him answered in softe speche:
'Brother,' quod he, 'fer in the north contré
Wheras I hope somtyme I schal the se.
Er we depart I schal the so wel wisse,
That of myn hous ne schaltow never misse.'
'Now, brother,' quod this sompnour, 'I yow pray,
Teche me, whil that we ryden by the way,

Syn that ye ben a baily as am I,
Som subtilté as tel me faithfully
In myn office how that I may wynne.
And spare not for consciens or for synne,
But, as my brother, tel me how do ye.'
'Now, by my trouthe, brothir myn,' sayd he,
'As I schal telle the a faithful tale.
My wages ben ful streyt and eek ful smale;
My lord to me is *hard* and daungerous,
And myn office is ful laborous;
And therfor by extorciouns I lyve,
Forsoth I take al that men wil me yive,
Algate by sleighte or by violence
Fro yer to yer I wynne my despence;
I can no better telle faithfully.'
'Now certes,' quod this sompnour, 'so fare I;
I spare not to take, God it woot,
But-if it be to hevy or to hoot.
What I may gete in counseil prively,
No more conscions of that have I.
Nere myn extorcions, I mighte not lyven,
Ne of such japes I wil not be schriven.
Stomak ne conscience know I noon;
I schrew thes schrifte-fadres everychoon.
Wel be we met, by God and by seint Jame!
But, leve brother, telle me thy name,'
Quod this sompnour. In this mene-while
This yeman gan a litel for to smyle.
'Brothir,' quod he, 'woltow that I the telle?
I am a feend, my dwellyng is in helle,
And her I ryde about my purchasyng,
To wite wher men wol yive me eny thing.
My purchas is theffect of al my rent.

Loke how thou ridest for the same entent
To wynne good, thou rekkist never how,
Right so fare I, for ryde I wolde now
Unto the worldes ende for a pray.'
'A!' quod the sompnour, '*benedicite*, what ye say?
I wende ye were a yeman trewely.
Ye han a mannes schap as wel as I,
Have ye a figure than determinate
In helle, ther ye ben in your estate?'
'Nay, certeynly,' quod he, 'ther have we non,
But whan us likith we can take us on,
Or ellis make yow seme that we ben schape
Som tyme like a man, or like an ape;
Or lik *an* aungel can I ryde or go;
It is no wonder thing though it be so
A lousy jogelour can decyve the,
And, parfay, yit can I more craft than he.'
'Why,' quod this sompnour, 'ryde ye than or goon
In sondry wyse, and nought alway in oon?'
'For,' quod he, 'we wol us in such forme make,
As most abil is oure pray to take.'
'What makith yow to have al this labour?'
'Ful many a cause, lieve sir sompnour,'
Sayde this feend. 'But al thing hath a tyme;
The day is schort, and it is passed prime,
And yit ne wan I nothing in this day;
I wol entent to wynnyng, if I may,
And not entende oure thinges to declare;
For, brother myn, thy wit is al to bare
To understond, although I told hem the.
For but thou axid whi laboure we;
For som tyme we ben Goddis instrumentes
And menes to don his comaundementes,

Whan that him list, upon his creatures,
In divers act and in divers figures.
Withouten him we have no might certeyn,
If that him liste stonde ther ageyn.
And som tyme at our prayer have we leeve,
Only the body, and not the soule greve;
Witnes on Jope, whom we dide ful wo.
And som tyme have we might of bothe two,
This is to say of body and soule eeke.
And som tyme be we suffred for to seeke
Upon a man, and doon his soule unrest
And not his body, and al is for the best.
Whan he withstondith oure temptacioun,
It is a cause of his savacioun,
Al be it so it was nought oure entente
He schulde be sauf, but that we wold him hente.
And som tyme we ben servaunt unto man,
As to therchebisschop seynt Dunstan,
And to thapostolis, servaunt was I.'

'Yit tel me,' quod the sompnour, 'faithfully.
Make ye yow newe bodies alway
Of elementz?' The fend answerde, 'Nay;
Som tyme we feyne, and som tyme we ryse
With dede bodies, in ful wonder wyse,
And speke renably, and as fair and wel
As to the Phitonissa dede Samuel;
And yit wol somme say, it was not he.
I do no fors of your divinité.
But oon thing warne I the, I wol not jape,
Thou wilt algates wite how we ben schape:
Thou schalt herafter-ward, my brother deere,
Com, wher the nedith nothing for to leere,
For thou schalt by thin oughn experience

Conne in a chayer reden of this sentence
Bet than Virgile, whils he was on lyve,
Or Daunt also. Now let us ryde blyve,
For I wol holde company with the,
Til it be so that thou forsake me.'
'Nay,' quod the sompnour, 'that schal nought betyde.
I am a yiman that knowen is ful wyde;
My trouthe wol I holde, as in this caas.
For though thou be the devyl Sathanas,
My trouthe wol I holde to the, my brother,
As I am swore, and ech of us to other,
For to be trewe bretheren in this caas;
For bothe we goon abouten oure purchas.
Tak thou thi part, and that men wil the yyven,
And I schal myn, thus may we bothe lyven.
And if eny of us have more than other,
Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother.'
'I graunte,' quod the devel, 'by my fay!'
And with that word thay riden forth her way;
And right at thentryng of a townes ende,
To which this sompnour schope him for to wende,
Thay seigh a cart, that chargid was with hay,
Which that a carter drof forth in his way.
Deep was the way, for which the carte stood;
This carter smoot, and cryde as he wer wood,
'Hayt, brok; hayt, scot; what spare ye for the stoones?
The fend,' quod he, 'yow fech body and bones,
As ferforthly as ever wer ye folid!
So moche wo as I have with yow tholid!
The devyl have al, both cart and hors and hay!'
This sompnour sayde, 'Her schal we se play.'
And ner the feend he drough, as nought ne were,

Ful prively, and rouned in his eere,
'Herke, my brother, herke, by thi faith!
Ne herest nought thou what the carter saith?
Hent it anoon, for he hath yiven it the,
Bothe hay and caples, and eek his cart, pardé!'
'Nay,' quod the devyl, 'God wot, never a del,
It is nought his entente, trustith wel,
Ask it thiself, if thou not trowist me,
Or ellis stint a while and thou schalt se.'
This carter thakketh his hors upon the croupe,
And thay bygonne to drawen and to stowpe.
'Hayt now,' quod he, 'ther Jhesu Crist yow blesse,
And al his hondwerk, bothe more and lesse!
That was wel twight, myn oughne lyard boy,
I pray God save thy body and seint Loy!
Now is my cart out of the sloo pardé!'
'Lo! brother,' quod the feend, 'what told I the?
Her may ye seen, myn owne deere brother,
The carter spak oon thing, and thought another.
Let us go forth abouten our viage;
Hier wynne I nothing upon cariage.'
Whan that thay comen somwhat out of toune,
This sompnour to his brothir gan to roune;
'Brothir,' quod he, 'her wonyth an old rebekke,
That had almost as lief to leese hir necke,
As for to yive a peny of hir good.
I *wol han twelf* pens though that sche go wood,
Or I wol somone hir to oure office;
And yit, God wot, I know of hir no vice.
But for thou canst not, as in this contré,
Wynne thy cost, tak her ensample of me.'
This sompnour clapped at the widowes gate;
'Com out,' quod he, 'thou olde viritrate;

I trowe thou hast som frere or prest with the.'
'Who clappith ther?' sayde this widow, '*benedicite*
God save yow, sir! what is your swete wille?'
'I have,' quod he, 'a somonaunce of a bille,
Up payne of cursyng, loke that thou be
To morwe biforn our erchedeknes kne,
To answere to the court of certeyn thinges.'
'Now,' quod sche, 'Jhesu Crist, and king of kinges,
So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.
I have ben seek, and that ful many a day.
I may not goon so fer;' quod sche, 'ne ryde,
But I be deed, so prikith it in my syde.
May I nat aske a lybel, sir sompnour,
And answer ther by my procuratour
To suche thing as men wol oppose me?'
'Yis,' quod this sompnour, 'pay anoon, let se,
Twelf pens to me, and I the wil acquite.
I schal no profyt have therby but lite;
My mayster hath the profyt and not I.
Com of, and let me ryden hastily;
Yif me my twelf pens, I may no lenger tarye.'
'Twelf pens?' quod sche, 'now lady seinte Marye
So wisly help me out of care and synne,
This wyde world though that I schulde wynne,
Ne have I not twelf pens withinne myn hold.
Ye knowen wel that I am pore and old;
Kithe youre almes on me pore wrecche.'
'Nay than,' quod he, 'the foule fend me fecche!
If I thexcuse, though thou schalt be spilt.'
'Allas!' quod sche, 'God wot, I have no gilt.'
'Pay me,' quod he, 'or by the swete seint Anne
As I wol bere away thy newe panne
For dette, which thou owest me of old,

Whan that thou madest thin housbond cokewold,
I payd at hom for thy correccioun.'
'Thou lixt,' quod sche, 'by my savacioun,
Ne was I never er now, wydow ne wyf,
Somound unto your court in al my lyf;
Ne never I was but of my body trewe.
Unto the devel rough and blak of hiewe
Yive I thy body and the panne also!'
And whan the devyl herd hir curse so
Upon hir knees, he sayd in this manere:
'Now, Mabely, myn owne modir deere,
Is this your wil in ernest that ye seye?'
'The devel,' quod sche, 'feeche him er he deye,
And panne and al, but he wol him repente!'
'Nay, olde stot, that is not myn entente,'
Quod this sompnour, 'for to repente me
For eny thing that I have had of the;
I wold I had thy smok and every cloth.'
'Now brothir,' quod the devyl, 'be not wroth;
Thy body and this panne is myn by right.
Thou schalt with me to helle yit to night,
Wher thou schalt knowen of our priveté
More than a maister of divinité.'
And with that word the foule fend him hente;
Body and soule, he with the devyl wente,
Wher as the sompnours han her heritage;
And God that maked after his ymage
Mankynde, save and gyde us alle and some,
And leene this sompnour good man to bycome.
'Lordyngs, I couth han told yow,' quod the frere,
'Had I had leysir for this sompnour here,
After the text of Crist, and Powel, and Jon,
And of *oure* other doctours many oon,

Such peynes that our herte might agrise,
Al be it so, no tonge may devyse,
Thou that I might a thousand wynter telle,
The peyn of thilke cursed hous of helle.
But for to kepe us from that cursed place,
Wakith, and prayeth Jhesu for his grace,
So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
Herknith this word, beth war as in this cas.
The lyoun syt in his awayt alway
To slen the innocent, if that he may.
Disposith youre hertes to withstonde
The fend, that wolde make yow thral and bonde;
He may not tempte yow over your might,
For Crist wol be your champioun and knight;
And prayeth, that oure Sompnour him repente
Of his mysdede, er that the fend him hente.'

THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGE.

HIS Sompnour in his styrop up he stood,
Upon the Frere his herte was so wood,
That lyk an aspen leef he quok for ire.
'Lordyngs,' quod he, 'but oon thing I desire;
I yow biseke, that of your curtesye,
Syn ye han herd this false Frere lye,
As suffrith me I may my tale telle.
This Frere bosteth that he knowith helle,
And, God it wot, that is litil wonder,
Freres and feendes been but litel asonder.
For, pardy, ye han often tyme herd telle,
How that a frere ravysght was to helle
In spirit ones by a visioun,
And as an aungel lad him up and doun,
To schewen him the peynes that ther were,
In al the place saugh he not a frere,
Of other folk he saugh y-nowe in wo.
Unto this aungel spak this frere tho:
"Now, sire," quod he, "han freres such a grace,
That noon of hem schal comen in this place?"
"Yis," quod this aungil, "many a mylioun."
And unto Sathanas he lad him doun.
"And now hath Sathanas," saith he, "a tayl
Broder than of a carrik is the sayl."
"Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas," quod he,
"Schew forth thyn ars, and let the frere se
Wher is the nest of freres in this place."

And er than half a forlong way of space,
Right so as bees swarmen out of an hyve,
Out of the develes ers thay gonne dryve,
Twenty thousand freres on a route,
And thorughout helle swarmed al aboute,
And comen *ayeine*, as fast as thay maye goon,
And in his ers thay crepen everichoon.
He clappid his tayl agayn, and lay ful stille.
This frere, whan he loked had his fille
Upon the torment of this sory place,
His spirit God restored of his grace
Unto his body agayn, and he awook;
But natheles for fere yit he quook,
So was the develes ers yit in his mynde,
That is his heritage of verray kynde.
God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere;
My proloug wol I ende in this manere.'

THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

LORDYNGS, ther is in Engelond, I gesse,
A mersschly lond called Holdernesse.
In which ther went a lymytour aboute
To preche, and eek to begge, it is no doubte.

And so bifel it on a day this frere
Hadde preched at a chirch in his manere,
And specially aboven every thing
Excited he the poepul in his preching
To trentals, and to yive for Goddis sake,

Wherwith men mighten holy houses make,
Ther as divine servys is honoured,
Nought ther as it is wasted and devoured;
Neither it needeth not for to be yive,
As to possessioneres, that mow lyve,
Thanked be God, in wele and abundaunce.
'Trentals,' sayd he, 'delyvereth fro penaunce
Her frendes soules, as wel eld as yonge,
Ye, whanne that thay hastily ben songe,
Nought for to hold a prest jolif and gay,
He syngith not but oon masse in a day.
Delyverith out anon,' quod he, 'the soules.
Ful hard it is, with fleischhok or with oules
To ben y-clawed, or brend, or i-bake;
Now speed yow hastily for Cristes sake.'
And whan this frere hadde sayd al his entente,
With qui cum patre, forth his way he wente.
Whan folk in chirch had yive him what hem leste,
He went his way, no lenger wold he reste,
With scrip and pyked staf, y-touked hye;
In every hous he gan to pore and prye,
And beggyde mele or chese, or ellis corn.
His felaw had a staf typped with horn,
A payr of tablis al of yvory,
And a poyntel y-polischt fetisly,
And wroot the names alway as he stood
Of alle folk that yaf him eny good,
Ascaunce that he wolde for hem preye.
'Yif us a busshel whet, or malt, or reye,
A Goddes kichil, or a trip of chese,
Or elles what yow list, we may not chese;
A Goddes halpeny, or a masse peny;
Or yif us of youre braune, if ye have eny,

A dagoun of your blanket, leeve dame,
Oure suster deer,—lo! her I write your name—
Bacoun or beef, or such thing as we fynde.'
A stourdy harlot ay went hem byhynde,
That was her hostis man, and bar a sak,
And what men yaf hem, layd it on his bak.
And whan that he was out atte dore, anoon
He planed out the names everychoon,
That he biforn had*de* writen in his tablis;
He served hem with nyfles and with fablis.
'Nay, ther thou lixt, thou Sompnour,' sayd*e* the Frere.
'Pees,' quod our host, 'for Cristes moder deere,
Tel forth thy tale, and spare it not at al.'
'So thrive I,' quod the Sompnour, 'so I schal!'
So long he wente hous by hous, til he
Cam til an hous, ther he was wont to be
Refresshid mor than in an hundrid placis.
Syk lay the housbond man, whos that the place is,
Bedred upon a couche lowe he lay.
'*Deus hic*,' quod he, 'O Thomas, frend, good day!'
Sayde this frere al curteysly and softe.
'O Thomas, God yeld it yow, ful ofte
Have I upon this bench i-fare ful wel,
Her have I eten many a mery mel.'
And fro the bench he drof away the cat,
And layd adoun his potent and his hat,
And eek his scrip, and set him soft adoun;
His felaw was go walkid in the toun
Forth with his knave, *into* the ostelrye,
Wher as he schop him thilke night to lye.
'O deere maister,' quod the seeke man,
'How have ye fare siththe March bygan?

I saygh yow nought this fourtenight or more.'
'God wot,' quod he, 'labord have I ful sore;
And specially for thy salvacioun
Have I sayd many a precious orisoun,
And for myn other frendes, God hem blesse.
I have to day ben at your chirche at messe,
And sayd a sermoun after my simple wit,
Nought al after the text of holy wryt.
For it is hard for yow, as I suppose.
And therfor wil I teche yow ay the glose.
Glosyng is a ful glorious thing certayn,
For letter sleth, so as we clerkes sayn.
Ther have I taught hem to be chariteable,
And spend her good ther it is reasonable;
And there I seigh our dame, wher is she?'
'Yond in the yerd I trowe that sche be,'
Sayde this man, 'and sche wil come anoon.'
'Ey, mayster, welcome be ye, by seint Johan!'
Sayde this wyf, 'how fare ye hertily?'
The frere ariseth up ful curteysly,
And her embracith in his armes narwe,
And kist hir swete, and chirkith as a sparwe
With his lippes: 'Dame,' quod he, 'right wel,
As he that is your servaunt everydel.
Thankyd be God, that yow yaf soule and lif,
Yit saugh I not this day so fair a wyf
In al the chirche, God so save me.'
'Ye, God amend defautes, sir,' quod sche,
'Algates welcome be ye, by my fay.'
'*Graunt mercy*, dame; this have I found alway.
But of your grete goodnes, by youre leve,
I wolde pray yow that ye yow not greeve,
I wil with Thomas speke a litel throwe;

These curates ben ful negligent and slowe
To grope tendurly a conscience.
In schrift and preching is my diligence,
And study in Petres wordes and in Poules,
I walk and fisshe Cristen mennes soules,
To yelde Jhesu Crist his propre rent;
To spreden his word is al myn entent.'
'Now, by your leve, o deere sir,' quod sche,
'Chyd him right wel for seinte Trinite.
He is as angry as a pissemyre,
Though that he have al that he can desire,
Though I him wrye on night, and make him warm,
And over him lay my leg other myn arm,
He groneth lik our boor, that lith in sty.
Othir disport of him right noon have I,
I may please him in no maner caas.'
'O Thomas, *jeo vous dy*, Thomas, Thomas,
This makth the feend, this moste ben amendid.
Ire is a thing that highe God defendid,
And therof wold I speke a word or tuo.'
'Now, maister,' quod the wyf, 'er that I go,
What wil ye dine? I will go theraboute.'
'Now, dame,' quod he, '*jeo vous dy saunz doute*,
Have I not of a capoun but the lyvere,
And of your softe brede but a schivere,
And after that a rostyd pigges heed,
(But that I wolde for me no best were deed)
Than had I with yow homly suffisaunce.
I am a man of litel sustinaunce.
My spirit hath his fostryng on the Bible.
The body is ay so redy and so penyble
To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.
I pray yow, dame, that ye be not anoyed,

For I so frendly yow my counseil schewe;
By *God!* *I* nolde not telle it but a fewe.'
'Now, sir,' quod sche, 'but o word er I go.
My child is deed withinne thise wykes two,
Soon after that ye went out of this toun.'
'His deth saugh I by revelacioun,'
Sayde this frere, 'at hoom in oure dortour.
I dar wel sayn, er that half an hour
After his deth, I seigh him born to blisse
In myn avysioun, so God me wisse.
So did our sextein, and our fermerere,
That han ben trewe freres many a yere;
Thay may now, God be thanked of his lone,
Maken her jubilé, and walk alloone.
But up I roos, and al our covent eeke,
With many a teere trilling on my cheeke,
Te Deum was our song, and nothing ellis,
Withouten noys or clateryng of bellis,
Save that to Crist I sayd an orisoun,
Thankyng him of my revelacioun.
For, sire and dame, trustith me right wel,
Our orisouns ben more effectuel,
And more we se of Goddis secré thinges,
Than borel folk, although that thay ben kinges.
We lyve in povert and in abstinence,
And borel folk in riches and dispence
Of mete and drink, and in her ful delyt.
We han this worldes *lust* al in despyt.
Lazar and Dives lyveden diversely.
And divers guerdoun hadde thay thereby.
Who-so wol praye, *he muste* faste, and be clene,
And fatte his soule, and make his body lene.
We faren, as saith thapostil; cloth and foode

Sufficeth us, though that thay ben not goode.
The clennes and the fastyng of us freres
Makith that Crist acceptith oure prayeres.
Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty night
Fasted, er that the highe God of might
Spak with him in the mount of Synay;
With empty wombe fastyng many a day,
Receyved he the lawe, that was writen
With Goddis fynger; and *Eli*, wel ye *witen*,
In mount Oreb, or he had any speche
With highe God, that is oure lyves leche,
He fastid, and was in contemplacioun.
Aron, that hadde the temple in governacioun,
And eek the other prestes everychoon,
Into the temple whan thay schulden goon
To preye for the poeple, and doon servise,
Thay nolden drinken in no maner wise
No drynke, which that dronke might hem make,
But ther in abstinence prey and wake,
Lest that they diden; tak heed what I saye—
But thay ben sobre that for the pepul praye—
War that I say—no mor; for it suffisith.
Oure Lord Jhesu, as oure lore devysith,
Yaf us ensampil of fastyng and prayeres;
Therfore we mendivantz, we sely freres,
Ben wedded to povert and to continence,
To charité, humblesse, and abstinence,
To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,
To wepyng, misericord, and clennesse.
And therfor may ye seen that oure prayeres
(I speke of us, we mendeaunts, we freres)
Ben to the hihe God more acceptable
Than youres, with your festis at your table.

Fro Paradis first, if I schal not lye,
Was man out chaced for his glotonye,
And chast was man in Paradis certeyn.
But now herk, Thomas, what I schal the seyn,
I ne have no tixt of it, as I suppose,
But I schal fynd it in a maner glose;
That specially our swete Lord Jhesus
Spak this by freres, whan he sayde thus,
Blessed be thay that pover in spirit ben.
And so forth in the gospel ye maye seen,
Whether it be likir oure professioun,
Or heris that swymmen in possessioun.
Fy on her pomp, and on her glotenye,
And on her lewydnesse! I hem defye.
Me thinkith thay ben lik Jovynian,
Fat as a whal, and walken as a swan;
Al vinolent as botel in the spence.
Her prayer is of ful gret reverence;
Whan thay for soules sayn the Psalm of David,
Lo, boef thay say, *Cor meum eructavit.*
Who folwith Cristes gospel and his lore
But we, that humble ben, and chast, and pore,
Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?
Therfor right as an hauk upon a sours
Upspringeth into thaer, right so prayeres
Of charitabil and chaste busy freres
Maken our sours to Goddis eeres tuo.
Thomas, Thomas, so mote I ryde or go,
And by that Lord that clepid is seint Ive,
Ner thou oure brother, schuldestow never thrive.
In oure chapitre pray we day and night
To Crist, that he the sende hele and might
Thy body for to welden hastily.'

'God wot,' quod he, 'therof nought feele I,
As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeeres
Have spendid upon many diveris freres
Ful many a pound, yet fare I never the bet;
Certeyn my good have I almost byset.
Farwel my gold, for it is almost ago.'
The frere answerd. 'O Thomas, dostow so?
What needith yow dyverse freres seche?
What needith him that hath a parfyt leche
To sechen othir leches in the toun?
Youre inconstance is youre confusioun.
Holde ye than me, or elles oure covent,
To praye for yow insufficient?
Thomas, that jape is not worth a myte;
Youre malady is for we have to lite.
A! yive that covent half a quarter otes;
A! yive that covent four and twenty grotes;
A! yive that frere a peny, and let him go;
Nay, nay, Thomas, it may nought be so.
What is a ferthing worth depart in tuelve?
Lo, ech thing that is ooned in himselve
Is more strong than whan it is to-skatrid.
Thomas, of me thou schalt not ben y-flatrid,
Thow woldist have our labour al for nought.
The hihe God, that al this world hath wrought
Saith, that a werkman is worthy his hyre.
Thomas, nought of your tresor I desire
As for myself, but for that oure covent
To praye for yow is ay so diligent;
And for to buylden Cristes holy chirche.
Thomas, if ye wil lerne for to wirche,
Of buyldyng up *of* chirches may ye fynde
If it be good, in Thomas lyf of Ynde.

Ye lye her ful of anger and of ire,
With which the devel set your hert on fuyre,
And chyden her the holy innocent
Your wyf, that is so meke and pacient.
And therfor trow me, Thomas, if thou list,
Ne stryve nought with thy wyf, as for thi best
And ber this word away now by thy faith,
Touchinge such thing, lo, the wise man saith,
Withinne thin hous be thou no lyoun:
To thy subjects do noon oppressioun:
Ne make thyn acqueyntis fro the fle.
And yit, Thomas, eftsons I charge the,
Be war for ire that in thy bosom slepith,
War for the serpent, that so *slely* crepith
Under the gras, and styngith prively;
Be war, my sone, and werk paciently,
For twenty thousend men han lost her lyves
For stryvyng with her lemmans and her wyves.
Now syns ye han so holy and meeke a wif,
What nedith yow, Thomas, to make strif?
Ther nys, i-wis, no serpent so cruel,
When men trede on his tail, ne half so fel,
As womman is, when sche hath caught an ire:
Vengeans is thanne al that thay desire.
Schortly may no man, by rym and vers,
Tellen her thoughtes, thay ben so dyvers.
Ire is a *sinne*, oon the grete of sevene,
Abhominable to the God of hevene,
And to himself it is destruccioun.
This every lewed vicory or parsoun
Can say, how ire engendrith homicide;
Ire is in soth executour of pride.
I couthe of ire seyn so moche sorwe,

My tale schuldo laste til to morwe.
Ire is the grate of synne, as saith the wise,
To fle therfro ech man schuld him devyse.
And therfor pray I God bothe day and night,
An irous man God send him litil might.
It is greet harm, and also great pité,
To set an irous man in high degré.
'Whilom ther was an irous potestate,
As seith Senek, that duryng his estaat
Upon a day out riden knightes tuo;
And, as fortune wolde right as it were so,
That oon of hem cam home, that other nought.
Anoon the knight bifore the juge is brought,
That sayde thus, Thou hast thy felaw slayn,
For which I deme the to deth certayn
And to anothir knight comaundid he,
Go, lede him to the deth, I charge the.
And happed, as thay wente by the weye
Toward the place ther he schulde deye,
The knight com, which men wend hadde be deed.
Than thoughten thay it were the beste reed
To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn.
Thay sayden, Lord, the knight hath not slayn
His felaw; lo, heer he stont hool on lyve.
Ye schal be deed, quod he, so mote I thrive!
That is to sayn, bothe oon, tuo, and thre.
And to the firste knyght right thus spak he;
I deme the, thou most algate be deed.
Than thoughte thay it were the beste rede,
To lede him forth into a fair mede.
And, quod the juge, also thou most lese thin heed,
For thou art cause why thy felaw deyth.
And to the thridde felaw thus he seith;

Thou hast nought doon that I comaundid the.
And thus let don sle hem alle thre.
Irous Cambises was eek dronkelewe,
And ay delited him to ben a schrewe;
And so bifel, a lord of his meigné,
That loved vertues, and eek moralité,
Sayd on a day bitwix hem tuo right thus,
A lord is lost, if he be vicious;
An irous man is lik a frentik best,
In which ther is of wisdom noon arrest:
And dronkenes is eek a foul record
Of any man, and namly of a lord.
Ther is ful many an eyghe and many an eere
Awaytand on a lord, and he not where.
For Goddes love, drynk more attemperelly:
Wyn makith man to lese wrecchedly
His mynde, and eek his lymes everichoon.
The revers schaltow seen quod he, anoon,
And prove it by thin owne experience,
That wyn ne doth to folk non such offence.
Ther is no won byreveth me my wight
Of hond, of foot, ne of myn eyghe sight.
And for despyt he dronke moche more
An hundrid part than he hadde doon byfore;
And right anoon, this irous cursid wreeche
Let this knightes sone anoon biforn him feeche,
Comaundyng hem thay schulde biforn him stonde;
And sodeinly he took his bowe on honde,
And up the streng he pullede to his eere,
And with an arwe he slough the child right there.
Now whethir have I a sikur hond or noon?
Quod he, Is al my mynde and might agoon?
Hath wyn byrevyd me myn eye sight?

What schuld I telle the answer of the knight?
His sone was slayn, ther is no more to saye.
Be war therfor with lordes how ye playe,
Syngith *Placebo*, and I schal if I can.
But-if it be unto a pore man;
To a pore man men schuld his vices telle,
But not to a lord, they he schulde go to helle.
Lo, irous Cirus thilke Percien,
How he destruyede the ryver of Gysen,
For that an hors of his was dreynt therinne,
Whan that he wente Babiloyne to wynne:
He made that the ryver was so smal,
That wommen mighte wade it overal.
Lo, what sayde he, that so wel teche can?
Ne be no felaw to an irous man,
Ne with no wood man walke by the waye,
Lest the repent. I wel no lenger saye.
Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,
Thow schalt me fynde as just as is a squire;
Thyn anger doth the al to sore smerte,
Hald not the develes knyf *ay* at thyn herte,
But schewe to me al thy confessioun.'

'Nay,' quod this syke man, 'by seynt Symoun,
I have ben schriven this day of my curate:
I have him told holly al myn estate.
Nedith no more to speken of it, saith he,
But if me list of myn humilité.'

'Yif me than of thy good to make our cloyster,'
Quod he, 'for many a muscle and many an oyster
Hath ben oure foode, our cloyster to arreyse.
Whan other men han ben ful wel at eyse;
And yit, God wot, unnethe the foundement
Parformed is, ne of oure pavyment

Is nought a tyle yit withinne our wones;
By God, we owe yit fourty pound for stones.
Now help, Thomas, for him that harewed helle,
Or elles moote we oure bookes selle;
And yif yow lakke oure predicacioun,
Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.
For who-so wold us fro the world byreve,
So God me save, Thomas, by youre leve,
He wolde byreve out of this world the sonne.
For who can teche and werken as we conne?
And this is not of litel tyme,' quod he,
'But siththen Elye was her, or Elisee,
Han freres ben, fynde I of record,
In charite, i-thanked be oure Lord.
Now, Thomas, help for seynte Charité.'
Adoun he sette him anoon on his kne.

This sike man wex wel neigh wood for ire,
He wolde that the frere had ben on fuyre
With his fals dissimulacioun.
'Such thing as is in my possessioun,'
Quod he, 'that may I yeve yow and noon other;
Ye sayn me thus, how that I am your brother.'
'Ye certes,' quod the frere, 'trusteth wel;
I took our dame the letter, under our sel.'
'Now wel,' quod he, 'and somewhat schal I yive
Unto your holy convent whils that I lyve;
And in thyn hond thou schalt it have anoon,
On this condicioun, and other noon,
That thou depart it so, my deere brother,
That every frere have as moche as other,
Thys schaltow swere on thy professioun,
Withouten fraude or cavillacioun.'
'I swere it,' quod this frere, 'upon my faith.'

And therwith his hond in his he laith;
'Lo her myn hond, in me schal be no lak.'
'Now thanne, put thyn hond doun at my bak,'
Sayde this man, 'and grop wel byhynde,
Bynethe my buttok, there schaltow fynde
A thing, that I have hud in priveté.'
'A! thought this frere, 'that schal go with me.'
And doun his hond he launchede to the clifte,
In hope for to fynde ther a yifte.
And whan this syke man felte this frere
Aboute his tuel grope ther and heere,
Amyd his hond he leet the freere a fart;
Ther is no capul drawyng in a cart
That might have let a fart of such a soun.
The frere upstart, as doth a wood lyoun:
'A! false cherl,' quod he, 'for Goddes bones!
This hastow in despit don for the noones;
Thou schalt abye this fart, if that I may.'
His meyné, which that herd of this affray,
Com lepand in, and chased out the frere.
And forth he goth with a foul angry cheere,
And fat his felaw, there as lay his stoor;
He lokid as it were a wylde boor,
And grynte with his teeth, so was he wroth.
A stordy paas doun to the court he goth,
Wher as ther wonyd a man of gret honour,
To whom that he was alway confessour;
This worthy man was lord of that village.
This frere com, as he were in a rage,
Wher that this lord sat etyng at his bord:
Unnethe mighte the frere speke a word,
Til atte last he sayde, 'God yow se!'
This lord gan loke, and sayde, *Benedicite!*

What, frere Johan! what maner world is this?
I se *right* wel that som thing is amys;
Ye loke as though the woode were ful of thevys
Sit doun anoon, and tel me what your gref is,
And it schal ben amendit, if that I may.'
'I have,' quod he, 'had a despit to day,
God yelde yow, adoun in youre vilage,
That in this world is noon so pore a page,
That he nold have abhominacioun
Of that I have receyved in youre toun;
And yet ne grevith me no thing so sore,
As that this elde cherl, with lokkes hore,
Blasphemed hath our holy covent eeke.'
'Now, maister,' quod this lord, 'I yow biseke.'
'No maister, sir,' quod he, 'but servitour,
Though I have had in scole such honour.
God likith not that Raby men us calle,
Neither in market, neyther in your large halle.'
'No fors,' quod he, 'tellith me al your greef.'
This frere sayde, 'Sire, an odious meschief
This day bytid is to myn ordre and to me,
And so *par consequens* to ech degré
Of holy chirche, God amend it soone!'
'Sir,' quod the lord, 'ye wot what is to doone;
Distempre yow nought, ye ben my confessour,
Ye ben the salt of therthe, and savyour:
For Goddes love, youre pacience ye holde;
Tel me your greef.' And he anoon him tolde
As ye han herd bifore, ye wot wel what.
The lady of that hous ay stille sat,
Til sche had herd what the frere sayde.
'Ey Goddes moodir!' quod she, 'blisful mayde!
Is ther ought elles? tel me faithfully.'

'Madame,' quod he, 'how thynke yow therby?'
'How that me thynkith?' quod sche; 'so God me speede!
I say, a cherl hath doon a cherles deede.
What schuld I say? God let him never the!
His syke heed is full of vanyté.
I hold him in a maner frenesye.'
'Madame,' quod he, 'I-wis I schal not lye,
But I in othir wise may be *a* wreke,
I schal defame him overal wher I speke;
The false blasfememour, that chargide me
To parten that wil not departed be,
To every man y-liche, with meschaunce!'
The lord sat stille, as he were in a traunce,
And in his hert he rollid up and doun,
'How hadde this cherl ymaginacioun
To schewe such a probleme to the frere?
Never erst er now herd I of such matiere;
I trowe the devel put it in his mynde.
In arsmetrik schal ther no man fynde
Biforn this day of such a questioun.
Who schulde make a demonstracioun,
That every man schuld have alyk his part
As of a soun or savour of a fart?
O nyce proude cherl, I schrew his face!
Lo, sires,' quod the lord, with harde grace,
'Who ever herde of such a thing er now?
To every man y-like? tel me how.
It is impossible, it may not be.
Ey, nyce cherl, God let him never the!
The romblyng of a fart, and every soun,
Nis but *of* aier reverberacioun,
And ever it wastith lyte and lyt away;

Ther nys no man can deme, by my fay,
If that it were departed equally.
What, lo, my cherl, what, lo, how schrewedly
Unto my confessour to day he spak!
I hold him certeinly demoniak.
Now etith your mete, and let the cherl go play,
Let him go honge himself on devel way!'
Now stood the lordes squier at the bord,
That carf his mete, and herde word by word
Of al this thing, which that I of have sayd.
'My lord,' quod he, 'be ye nought evel payd,
I couthe telle for a gowne-cloth
To yow, sir frere, so that ye be not wroth,
How that this fart even departed schulde be
Among your covent, if I comaunded be.
'Tel,' quod the lord, 'and thou schalt have anoon
A goune-cloth, by God, and by Seint Johan!'
'My lord,' quod he, 'whan that the wedir is fair,
Withoute wynd, or pertourbyng of ayr,
Let bring a carte whel her into this halle,
But *loke* that it have his spokes alle;
Twelf spokes hath a cart whel comunly;
And bring me twelve freres, wit ye why?
For threttene is a covent as I gesse;
Your noble confessour, her God him blesse,
Schal parfourn up the nombre of this covent.
Thanne schal they knele doun by oon assent,
And to every spokes ende in this manere
Ful sadly lay his nose schal *ech* a frere;
Your noble confessour ther, God him save,
Schal hold his nose upright under the nave.
Than schal this churl, with bely stif and tought
As eny tabor, hider ben y-brought;

And sette him on the whele of this cart
Upon the nave, and make him lete a fart,
And ye schul seen, up peril of my lif,
By verray proef that is demonstratif,
That equally the soun of it wol wende,
And eek the stynk, unto the spokes ende;
Save that this worthy man, your confessour,
(Bycause he is a man of gret honour)
Schal have the firste fruyt, as resoun is.
The noble usage of freres is this,
The worthy men of hem first schal be served.
And certeynly he hath it wel deserved;
He hath to day taught us so mochil good,
With preching in the pulpit ther he stood,
That I may vouchesauf, I say for me,
He hadde the firste smel of fartes thre;
And so wold al his covent hardily,
He berith him so fair and holily.'

The lord, the lady, and eek man, sauf the frere,
Sayde *that* Jankyn spak in this matiere
As wel as Euclide, or elles Phtolomé.
Touchand the cherl, thay sayde that subtilté
And high wyt made him speken as he spak;
He nas no fool, ne no demoniak.
And Jankyn hath i-wonne a newe goune;
My tale is don, we ben almost at toune.

THE CLERK OF OXENFORDES PROLOGE.

IR Clerk of Oxenford,' our hoste sayde,
' Ye ryde as stille and coy as doth a mayde,
Were newe spoused, sittyng at the bord;
This day ne herd I of your mouth a word.
I trowe ye study aboute som sophime;
But Salomon saith, every thing hath tyme.
For Goddis sake! as beth of better cheere,
It is no tyme for to stodye hiere.
Tel us som mery tale, by your fay;
For what man is entred unto play,
He moot nedes unto that play assente.
But prechith not, as freres don in Lente,
To make us for our olde synnes wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us for to slepe.
Tel us som mery thing of adventures.
Youre termes, your colours, and your figures,
Keep hem in stoor, til so be that ye endite
High style, as whan that men to kynges write.
Spekith so playn at this tyme, we yow praye,
That we may understonde that ye saye.'

This worthy Clerk benignely answerde;
' Sir host,' quod he, ' I am under your yerde,
Ye have of us as now the governaunce,
And therfor wol I do yow obeissaunce,
As fer as resoun askith hardily.
I wil yow telle a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,

As provyd by his wordes and his werk.
He is now deed, and nayled in his chest,
Now God yive his soule wel good rest!
Fraunces Petrark, the laureat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rethorique swete
Enlumynd al Ytail of poetrie,
As Linian did of philosophie,
Or lawue, or other art particulere;
But deth, that wol not suffre us duellen heere,
But as it were a twyncling of an ye,
Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle schul *we* dye.
But forth to telle of this worthy man,
That taughte me this tale, as I first bigan,
I say that he first with heigh stile enditith
(Er he the body of his tale writith)
A proheme, in the which descrivith he
*Pie*mounde, and of Saluces the contre,
And spekith of Appenyne the hulles hye,
That ben the boundes of al west Lombardye;
And of mount Vesulus in special,
Wher as the Poo out of a welle smal
Takith his firste springyng and his sours,
That est-ward ay encresceth in his cours
To Emyl-ward, to Ferar*e*, and to Venise,
The which a long thing were to devyse.
And trewely, as to my juggement,
Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,
Save that he wolde conveyen his matiere;
But this is the tale which that ye schuln heere.'

THE CLERKES TALE.

THER is at the west ende of Ytaile,
Doun at the root of Vesulus the colde,
A lusty playn, abundaunt of vitaile,
Wher many a tour and toun thou maist byholde,
That foundid were in tyme of fadres olde,
And many anothir delitable sight,
And Saluces this noble contray hight.

A marquys whilom duellid in that lond,
As were his worthy eldris him bifore,
And obeisaunt ay redy to his hond,
Were alle his liegis, bothe lesse and more.
Thus in delyt he lyveth and hath don yore,
Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,
Bothe of his lordes and of his comune.

Therwith he was, as to speke of lynage,
The gentileste born of Lumbardye,
A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,
And ful of honour and of curtesie;
Discret y-nough his contré for to gye,
Savynge in som thing he was to blame;
And Wautier was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he considerede nought
In tyme comyng what mighte bityde,
But on his lust present was al his thought,
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde;
Wel neigh al othir cures let he slyde,
And eek he nolde (that was the worst of alle)

Wedde no wyf for no thing that mighte bifalle.
Only that poynt his poeple bar so sore,
That flokmel on a day to him thay wente,
And oon of hem, that wisest was of lore,
(Or elles that the lord wolde best assente
That he schuld telle him what his poeple mente,
Or ellis couthe he schewe wel such matiere)
He to the marquys sayd as ye schuln hiere.
'O noble marquys, youre humanité.
Assureth us and yiveth us hardynesse,
As ofte as tyme is of necessité,
That we to yow may telle oure hevynesse;
Acceptith, lord, now of your *gentilesse*,
That we with pitous hert unto yow playne,
And let your eeris not my vois disdeyne.
'And have I nought to doon in this matere
More than another man hath in this place,
Yit for as moche as ye, my lord so deere,
Han alway schewed me favour and grace,
I dar the better ask of yow a space
Of audience, to *schewen* oure request,
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow lest.
'For certes, lord, so wel us likith yow
And al your werk, and ever han doon, that we
Ne couthen not ourselve devysen how
We mighte lyve more in felicité;
Save oon thing, lord, if that your wille be,
That for to be weddid man yow list
Than were your pepel in sovereign hertes rest.
'Bowith your neck undir that blisful yok
Of sovereigneté, nought of servise,
Which that men clepe spousail or wedlok;
And thenkith, lord, among your thoughtes wise,

How that our dayes passe in sondry wyse;
For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, *or ryde*,
Ay fleth the tyme, it wil no man abyde.
'And though your grene youthe floure as yit,
In crepith age alway as stille as stoon,
And deth manasith every age, and smyt
In ech estat, for ther ascapith noon.
And as certeyn, as we knowe everychon
That we schuln deye, as uncerteyn we alle
Ben of that day that deth schal on us falle.
"Acceptith thanne of us the trewe entente,
That never yit refusede youre hest,
And we wil, lord, if that ye wil assente,
Chese yow a wyf, in schort tyme atte lest,
Born of the gentilest and the heighest
Of al this lond, so that it oughte seme
Honour to God and yow, as we can deme.
'Deliver us out of al this busy drede
And tak a wyf, for hihe Goddes sake.
For if it so bifel, as God forbede,
That thurgh your deth your lignage schuld aslake,
And that a straunge successour schulde take
Your heritage, O! wo were us on lyve!
Wherfor we praye yow hastily to wyve.'
Her meeke prayer and her pitous chere
Made the marquys for to han pité.
'Ye wolde,' quod he, 'myn owne poeple deere,
To that I never erst thought constreigne me.
I me rejoysid of my liberté,
That selden tyme is founde in mariage;
Ther I was fre, I mot bon in servage.
'But natheles I se of you the trewe entente,
And trust upon your witt, and have doon ay;

Wherfor of my fre wil I wil assente
To wedde me, as soon as ever I may.
But ther as ye have profred me to day
To chese me a wyf, I wol relese
That choys, and pray yow of that profre cesse.
'For God it woot, that childer ofte been
Unlik her worthy eldris hem bifore;
Bounté cometh al of God, nought of the streen
Of which thay ben engendrid and i-bore.
I trust in Goddis bounté, and therfore
My mariage, and myn estat and rest,
I him bytake, he may doon as him lest.
'Let me aloon in chesyng of my wif,
That charge upon my bak I wil endure.
But I yow pray, and charge upon your lyf,
That *what* wyf that I take, ye me assure
To worschip*pe* whil that hir lif may endure,
In word and werk, bothe heer and every where,
As sche an emperoures doughter were.
'And forthermor thus schul ye swere, that ye
Ayeins my chois schuln never grucche ne stryve,
For sins I schal forgo my liberté
At your request, as ever mot I thrive,
Ther as myn hert is set, ther wil I wyve.
And but ye wil assent in such manere,
I pray yow spek no more of this matiere.'
With hertly wil thay sworen and assentyn
To al this thing, ther sayde no wight nay,
Bysechyng him of grace, er that thay wentyn,
That he wol*de* graunten hem a certeyn day
Of his spousail, as soone as ever he may;
For yit alway the peple som what dredde
Lest that the marquys wolde no wyf wedde.

He graunted hem a day, such as him leste,
On which he wolde be weddid sicurly;
And sayd he dede al this at her requeste.
And thay with humble hert ful buxomly,
Knelyng upon her knees ful reverently,
Him thanken alle, and thus thay have an ende
Of her entent, and hom ayein they wende.
And herupon he to his officeris
Comaundith for the feste to purveye,
And to his privé knightes and squyeres
Suche charge yaf as him list on hem leye:
And thay to his comaundement obeye,
And eeh of hem doth his diligence
To doon unto the feste reverence.

PARS SECUNDA.

NOUGHT fer fro thilke palys honurable,
Wher as this marquys schop his mariage,
Ther stood a throp, of sighte delitable,
In which that pore folk of that vilage
Hadden her bestes and her herburgage,
And after her labour took her sustienaunce,
After the erthe yaf hem abundaunce.
Among this pore folk there duelt a man,
Which that was holden porest of hem alle;
But heighe God som tyme sende can
His grace unto a litel oxe stalle.
Janicula men of that throop him calle.
A doughter had he, fair y-nough to sight,
And Grisildes this yonge *mayden* hight.

But for to speke of hir vertuous beauté,
Than was sche oon the fayrest under the sonne;
For porely i-fostered up was sche,
No licorous lust was in *hir* body ronne;
Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne
She dronk, and for sche wolde vertu please,
Sche knew wel labour, but noon ydel ease.
But though this mayden tender were of age,
Yet in the brest of her virginité
Ther was enclosed rype and sad corrage;
And in gret reverence and charité
Hir olde pore fader fostered sche;
A fewe scheep spynnyng on the feld sche kepte,
Sche nolde not ben ydel til sche slepte.
And when sche hom-*ward* com sche wolde brynge
Wortis or other herbis tymes ofte,
The which sche schred and seth for her lyvynge,
And made hir bed ful hard, and nothing softe.
And ay sche kept hir fadres lif on lofte,
With every obeissance and diligence,
That child may do to fadres reverence.
Upon Grisildes, the pore creature,
Ful ofte sithes this marquys set is ye,
As he on huntyng rood par aventure.
And whan it fel he mighte hir espye,
He not with wantoun lokyng of folye
His eyghen cast upon hir, but in sad wyse
Upon hir cheer he wold him oft avise,
Comendyng in his hert hir wommanhede,
And eek hir vertu, passyng any other wight
Of so yong age, as wel in cheer as dede.
For though the poeple have no gret insight
In vertu, he considereth aright

Hir bounté, and desposede that he wolde
Wedde hir oonly, if ever he wedde scholde.
The day of weddyng cam, but no wight can
Telle what womman it schulde be;
For which mervayle wondrith many a man,
And sayden, whan they were in privité,
'Wol nought our lord yit leve his vanité?
Wol he not wedde? allas the while!
Why wol he thus himself and us bigyle?
But natheles this marquys hath doon make
Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,
Broches and rynges, for Grisildes sake,
And of hir clothing took he the mesure,
By a mayde y-lik to hir of stature,
And eek of other ornamentes alle
That unto such a weddyng schulde falle.
The tyme of undern of the same day
Approchith, that this weddyng schulde be,
And al the palys put was in array,
Bothe halle and chambur, y-lik here degré,
Houses of office stuffid with plenté;
Ther maystow se of deyntevous vitayle,
That may be founde, as fer as lastith Itaile.
This real marquys, really arrayd,
Lordes and ladyes in this compaignye,
The which unto the feste were prayed,
And of his retenu the bachelerie,
With many a soun of sondry melodye,
Unto the vilage, of which I tolde,
In this array the right way han they holde.
Grysild of this (God wot) ful innocent,
That for hir schapen was al this array,
To fecche water at a welle is went,

And cometh hom as soone as *ever* she may,
For wel she had herd saye, that ilke day
The marquys schulde wedde, and, if she mighte,
She wold have seyen somwhat of that sighte.
  She sayd, 'I wol with other maydenes stonde,
That ben my felawes, in oure dore, and see
The marquys*esse*, and therfore wol I fonde
To don at hom, as soone as it may be,
The labour which that longeth unto me,
And thanne may I at leysir hir byholde,
And she the way into the castel holde.'
  And as she wold over the threisshfold goon,
The marquys cam and gan hir for to calle.
And she set doun her water-pot anoon
Bisides the threischfold of this oxe stalle,
And doun upon hir knees she gan to falle,
And with sad countenaunce *she* knelith stille,
Til she had herd what was the lordes wille.
  This thoughtful marquys spak unto this mayde
Ful soberly, and sayd in this manere:
'Wher is your fader, Grisildes?' he sayde.
And she with reverence and humble cheere
Answerde, 'Lord, he is al redy heere.'
And in she goth withouten lenger let,
And to the marquys she hir fader fet.
  He by the hond than takith this olde man,
And sayde thus, whan he him had on syde:
'Janicula, I neither may ne can
Lenger the plesauns of myn herte hyde;
If that ye vouchesauf, what so betyde,
Thy doughter wil I take er that I wende
As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.
  'Thow lovest me, I wot it wel certeyn,

And art my faithful liege-man i-bore,
And al that likith me, I dar wel sayn,
It likith the, and specially therfore
Tel me that poynt, as ye have herd bifore,
If that thow wolt unto that purpos drawe,
To take me as for thy sone-in-lawe.'
The sodeyn caas the man astoneyde tho,
That reed he wax, abaischt, and al quakyng
He stood, unnethe sayd he wordes mo,
But oonly this: 'Lord,' quod he, 'my willyng
Is as ye wol, ayenst youre likyng
I wol no thing, ye be my lord so deere;
Right as yow list, governith this matiere.'
'Yit wol I,' quod this markys softely,
'That in thy chambre, I and thou and sche
Have a collacioun, and wostow why?
For I wol aske if *that* it hir wille be
To be my wyf, and reule hir after me;
And al this schal be doon in thy presence,
I wol nought speke out of thyn audience.'
And in the chamber, whil thay were aboute
Her tretys, which as ye schul after hiere,
The poeple cam unto the hous withoute,
And wondrid hem, in how honest manere
And tendurly sche kept hir fader deere;
But outerly Grisildes wonder mighte,
For never erst ne saugh sche such a sighte.
No wonder is though that sche were astoned,
To seen so gret a gest come into that place;
Sche never was to suche gestes woned,
For which sche lokede with ful pale face.
But schortly this matiere forth to chace,
These arn the wordes that the marquys sayde

To this benigne, verray, faithful mayde.
'Grisyld,' he sayde, 'ye schul wel understonde,
It liketh to your fader and to me,
That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,
As I suppose ye wile that it so be;
But these demaundes aske I first,' quod he,
'That sith it schal be doon in hasty wyse,
Wol ye assent, or elles yow avyse?
'I say this, be ye redy with good herte
To al my lust, and that I frely may
As me best liste do yow laughe or smerte,
And never ye to gruch it, night ne day;
And eek whan I say ye, ye say not nay,
Neyther by word, ne frownyng countenaunce?
Swer this, and here swer I our alliaunce.'
Wondryng upon this word, quakyng for drede,
Sche sayde: 'Lord, undigne and unworthy
I am to thilk honour that ye me bede;
But as ye wile your self, right so wol I;
And here I swere, that never wityngly
In werk, ne thought, I nyl now disobeye
For to be deed, though me were loth to deye.'
'This is ynough, Grisilde myn,' quod he.
And forth goth he with a ful sobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after that cam sche,
And to the pepul he sayd in this manere:
'This is my wyf,' quod he, 'that stondith heere.
Honoureth hir, and loveth hir, I yow praye,
Who so me loveth; ther is no more to saye.'
And for that no thing of hir olde gere
Sche schulde brynge unto his hous, he bad
That wommen schulde despoilen hir right there,
Of which these ladyes were nought ful glad

To handle hir clothes wherin sche was clad;
Tut natheles this mayde bright of hew
Fro foot to heed thay schredde han al newe.
Hir heeres han thay kempt, that lay untressed
Ful rudely, and with hire fyngres smale
A coroun on hir heed thay han i-dressed,
And set hir ful of nowches gret and smale.
Of hir array what schuld I make a tale?
Unnethe the poeple hir knew for hir fairnesse,
Whan sche translated was in such richesse.
This marquis hath hir spoused with a ryng
Brought for the same cause, and than hir sette
Upon an hors snow-whyt, and wel amblyng,
And to his palys, er he lenger lette,
(With joyful poeple, that hir ladde and mette)
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.
And schortly forth this tale for to chace,
I say, that to this newe marquisesse
God hath *such* favour sent hir of his grace,
That it ne semyde not by liklynesse
That sche was born and fed in rudenesse,
As in a cote, or in an oxe stalle,
But norischt in an emperoures halle.
To every wight sche waxen is so deere
And worschipful, that folk ther sche was born,
And from hir burthe knew hir yer by yere,
Unnethe trowede thay, but dorst han sworn,
That to Janicle, of which I spak biforn,
Sche doughter were, for as by conjecture
Hem thoughte sche was another creature.
For though that ever vertuous was sche,
Sche was encresed in such excellence

Of thewes goode, i-set in high bounte,
And so discret, and fair of eloquence,
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,
And couthe so the poeples hert embrace,
That ech hir loveth that lokith in hir face.
Nought oonly of Saluce in the toun
Puplissched was the bounté of hir name,
But eek byside in many a regioun,
If oon sayde wel, another sayde the same.
So sprad of hire heigh bounté the fame,
That men and wommen, as wel yong as olde,
Gon to Saluce upon hir to byholde.
This Walter lowly, nay but really,
Weddid with fortunat honesteté,
In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily
At home, and outward grace ynough hath he;
And for he saugh that under low degre
Was ofte vertu y-hid, the poeple him helde
A prudent man, and that is *seen* ful selde.
Nought oonly this Grisildes thurgh hir witte
Couthe al the feet of wifly *homlynesse*,
But eek whan that the tyme required it,
The comun profyt couthe sche redresse;
Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
In al that lond, that sche ne couthe appese,
And wisly bryng hem alle in rest and ese.
Though that hir housbond absent were anoon,
If gentilmen, or other of hir contré,
Were wroth, sche wolde brynge hem at oon,
So wyse and rype wordes hadde sche,
And juggement of so gret equité,
That sche from heven sent was, as men wende,
Poeple to save, and every wrong to amende.

Nought longe tyme after that this Grisilde
Was wedded, sche a doughter hath i-bore;
Al had hir lever han had a knave childe,
Glad was this marquis and the folk therfore,
For though a mayden child come al byfore,
Sche may unto a knave child atteigne
By liklihed, and sche nys not bareigne.

INCIPIT TERTIA PARS.

THER fel, as fallith many tymes mo,
Whan that this child hath souked but a throwe,
This marquys in his herte longith so
Tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe,
That he ne might out of his herte throwe
This mervaylous desir his wyf tassaye;
Neddes, God wot, he thought hir to affraye.

He had assayed hir ynough bifore,
And fond hir ever good, what needith it
Hire to tempte, and alway more and more?
Though som men prayse it for a subtil wit,
But as for me, I say that evel it sit
Tassay a wyf whan that it is no neede,
And putte hir in anguysch and in dreede.

For which this marquis wrought in this manere;
He com aloone a-night ther as sche lay
With sterne face, and with ful trouble cheere,
And sayde thus 'Grislid,' quod he, 'that day
That I yow took out of your pore array,
And putte yow in estat of heigh noblesse,

Ye have not that forgeten, as I gesse.
'I say, Grisild, this present dignité
In which that I have put yow, as I trowe,
Makith yow not foryetful for to be
That I yow took in pore estat ful lowe,
For eny wele ye moot your selve knowe.
Tak heed of every word that I yow saye,
Ther is no wight that herith it but we twaye.
'Ye wot your self how *that* ye comen heere
Into this hous, it is nought long ago;
And though to me that ye be leef and deere,
Unto my gentils ye be no thing so.
Thay seyn, to hem it is gret schame and wo
For to ben subject and ben in servage
To the, that born art of a smal village.
'And namely syn thy doughter was i-bore,
These wordes han thay spoken douteles.
But I desire, as I have doon byfore,
To lyve my lif with hem in rest and pees;
I may not in this caas be reccheles;
I moot do with thy doughter for the beste,
Not as I wolde, but as my pepul leste.
'And yit, God wot, this is ful loth to me.
But natheles withoute youre witynge
Wol I not doon; but this wold I,' quod he,
'That ye to me assent as in this thing.
Schew now your paciens in your wirching,
That thou me hightest and swor in yon village,
That day that maked was oure mariage.'
Whan sche had herd al this sche nought ameevyd
Neyther in word, in cheer, or countenaunce,
(For, as it semede, sche was nought agreeved);
She sayde, 'Lord, al lith in your plesaunce;

My child and I, with hertly obeisaunce,
Ben youres al, and ye may save or spille
Your oughne thing: werkith after your wille.
'Ther may no thing, so God my soule save,
Liken to yow, that may displesen me;
Ne I desire no thing for to have,
Ne drede for to lese, save oonly ye.
This wil is in myn hert, and ay schal be,
No length of tyme or deth may this deface,
Ne chaunge my corrage to other place.'
Glad was this marquis of hir answeryng,
But yit he feyned as he were not so.
Al dreery was his cheer and his lokyng,
Whan that he schold out of the chambre go.
Soon after this, a forlong way or tuo,
He prively hath told al his entente
Unto a man, and unto his wyf him sente.
A maner sergeant was this privé man,
The which that faithful oft he founden hadde
In thinges grete, and eek such folk wel can
Don execucioun in thinges badde;
The lord knew wel that he him loved and dradde.
And whan this sergeant wist his lordes wille,
Into the chamber he stalked him ful stille.
'Madame,' he sayde, 'ye moste forvive it me,
Though I do thing to which I am constreynit;
Ye ben so wys, that ful wel knowe ye,
That lordes hestes mowe not ben i-feynit.
Thay mowe wel biwayl it or compleyn it;
But men moot neede unto her lust obeye,
And so wol I, there is no more to seye.
'This child I am comaundid for to take.'
And spak no more, but out the child he hente

Dispitously, and gan a chiere make,
As though he wold han slayn it, er he wente.
Grisild moot al suffer and al consente;
And as a lamb sche sitteth meeke and stille,
And let this cruel sergeant doon his wille.
Suspecious was the defame of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.
Allas! hir doughter, that she lovede so,
Sche wende he wold han slayen it right tho;
But natheles sche neyther weep ne sikede,
Conformyng hir to that the marquis likede.
But atte laste speke sche bigan,
And mekely sche to the sergeant preyde,
So as he was a worthy gentilman,
That she moste kisse hir child, er that it deyde.
And on hir arm this litel child sche leyde,
With ful sad face, and gan the child to blesse,
And lullyd it, and after gan it kesse.
And thus sche sayd in hir benigne vois:
'Farwel, my child, I schal the never see;
But sith I the have marked with the croys,
Of thilke fader blessed mot thou be,
That for us deyde upon a cros of tre;
Thy soule, litel child, I him bytake,
For this night schaltow deyen for my sake.'
I trowe that to a norice in this caas
It hadde ben hard this rewthe for to see;
Wel might a moder than have cryed allas,
But natheles so sad stedefast was sche,
That she endured al adversité,
And to the sergeant mekely sche sayde,
'Have her agayn your litel yonge mayde.

'Goth now,' quod sche, 'and doth my lordes heste;
But o thing wil I praye yow of your grace,
That but my lord forbede yow atte leste,
Burieth this litel body in som place,
That bestes ne no briddes it to-race.'
But he no word wil to the purpos saye,
But took the child and went upon his waye.

This sergeant com unto this lord agayn,
And of Grisildes wordes and hir cheere
He tolde poynt for poynt, in schort and playn,
And him presentith with his doughter deere.
Somwhat this lord hath rewthe in his manere,
But natheles his purpos huld he stille,
As lordes doon, whan thay woln have her wille;

And bad the sergeaunt that he prively
Scholde this childe softe wynde and wrappe,
With alle circumstaunces tendurly,
And cary it in a cofre, or in his lappe;
Upon peyne his heed of for to swappe
That no man schulde knowe of this entente,
Ne whens he com, ne whider that he wente;

But at Boloyne, to his suster deere,
That thilke tyme of Panik was countesse,
He schuld it take, and schewe hir this matiere,
Byseching her to doon hir busynesse
This child to fostre in alle gentilesse,
And whos child that it was he bad hir hyde
From every wight, for ought that mighte bytyde.

The sergeant goth, and hath fulfild this thing.
But to this marquys now retourne we;
For now goth he ful fast ymaginyng,
If by his wyves cher he mighte se,
Or by hir word apparceyve, that sche

Were chaunged, but he hir never couthe fynde,
But ever in oon y-like sad and kynde.
As glad, as humble, as busy in servise
And eek in love, as sche was wont to be,
Was sche to him, in every maner wyse;
Ne of hir doughter nought o word spak sche;
Non accident for noon adversité
Was seyn in hir, ne never hir doughter name
Ne nempnyd sche, in ernest ne in game.

INCIPIT QUARTA PARS.

IN this estaat ther passed ben foure yer
Er sche with childe was, but, as God wolde,
A knave child sche bar by this Waltier,
Ful gracious, and fair for to biholde;
And whan that folk it to his fader tolde,
Nought only he, but al his contré, merye
Was for this child, and God thay thank and herie.
When it was tuo yer old, and fro the brest
Departed fro his noris, upon a day
This markys caughte yit another lest
To tempt his wif yit after, if he may.
O! needles was sche tempted in assay;
But weddid men ne knowen no mesure,
Whan that thay fynde a pacient creature.
'Wyf,' quod this marquys, 'ye han herd er this
My peple sekly berith oure mariage,
And namly syn my sone y-boren is,
Now is it wors than ever in al our age;
The murmur sleth myn hert and my corrage,

For to myn eeris cometh the vois so smerte,
That it wel neigh destroyed hath myn herte.
'Now saye thay thus, Whan Wauter is agoon,
Than schal the blood of Janicula succede,
And ben our lord, for other have we noon.
Suche wordes saith my poeple, out of drede.
Wel ought I of such murmur taken heede,
For certeynly I drede such sentence,
Though thay not pleynly speke in myn audience.
'I wolde lyve in pees, if that I mighte;
Wherfor I am disposid outrely,
As I his suster servede by nighte,
Right so thynk I to serve him prively.
This warn I you, that ye not sodeinly
Out of your self for no *woo* schuld outraye:
Beth pacient, and therof I yow praye.'
'I have,' quod sche, 'sayd thus and ever schal,
I wol no thing, ne nil no thing certayn,
But as yow list; nought greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn
At your comaundement; this is to sayne,
I have not had no part of children twayne,
But first syknes, and after wo and payne.
'Ye ben oure lord, doth with your owne thing
Right as yow list, axith no red of me;
For as I left at hom al my clothing,
Whan I first com to yow, right so,' quod sche,
'Left I my wille and my liberté,
And took your clothing; wherfor I yow preye,
Doth youre plesaunce, I wil youre lust obeye.
'And certes, if I hadde prescience
Your wil to knowe, er ye youre lust me tolde,
I wold it doon withoute negligence.

But now I wot your lust, and what ye wolde,
Al your plesaunce ferm and stable I holde,
For wist I that my deth wolde doon yow ease,
Right gladly wold I deye, yow to please
'Deth may make no comparisoun
Unto your love.' And whan this marquys say
The constance of his wyf, he cast adoun
His eyghen two, and wondrith that sche may
In pacience suffre al this array;
And forth he goth with drery countenaunce,
But to his hert it was ful gret plesaunce.
This ugly sergeaunt in the same wise
That he hir doughter fette, right so he,
Or worse, if men worse can devyse,
Hath hent hir sone, that ful was of beauté.
And ever in oon so pacient was sche,
That sche no cheere made of hevynesse,
But kist hir sone, and after gan him blesse.
Save this sche prayed him, if that he mighte,
Her litel sone he wold in eorthe grave,
His tendre lymes, delicate to sight,
From foules and from bestes him to save.
But sche noon answer of him mighte have.
He went his way, as him no thing ne roughte,
But to Boloyne he tenderly it broughte.
This marquis wondreth ever the lenger the more
Upon hir pacience, and if that he
Ne hadde sothly knowen therbifore,
That parfytly hir children lovede sche,
He wold have wend that of some subtilté
And of malice, or of cruel corrage,
That sche hadde suffred this with sad visage.
But wel he knew, that, next himself, certayn

Sche loved hir children best in every wise.
But now of wommen wold I aske fayn,
If these assayes mighten not suffice?
What couthe a stourdy housebonde more devyse
To prove hir wyfhode and her stedefastnesse,
And he contynuyng ever in stourdynesse?
But ther ben folk of such condicioun,
That, whan thay have a certeyn purpos take,
Thay can nought stynt of her entencioun,
But, right as thay were bounden to a stake,
Thay wil not of her firste purpos slake;
Right so this marquys fullich hath purposed
To tempt his wyf, as he was first disposed.
He wayteth, if by word or countenaunce
That sche to him was chaunged of corage.
But never couthe he fynde variaunce,
Sche was ay oon in hert and in visage;
And ay the ferther that sche was in age,
The more trewe, if that it were possible,
Sche was to him, and more penyble.
For which it semyde this, that of hem tuo
Ther nas but oo wil; for as Walter leste,
The same plesaunce was hir lust also;
And, God be thanked, al fel for the beste.
Sche schewede wel, for no worldly unrest
A wyf, as of hir self, no thing ne scholde
Wylne in effect, but as hir housbond wolde.
The sclaunder of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,
That of a cruel hert he wikkedly,
For he a pore womman weddid hadde,
Hath morthrid bothe his children prively;
Such murmur was among hem comunly.
No wonder is; for to the peples eere

Ther com no word, but that thay mortherid were.
For which, wher as his peple therbyfore
Hadde loved him wel, the sclaunder of his diffame
Made hem that thay him hatede therfore;
To ben a mordrer is an hateful name.
But natheles, for ernest or for game,
He of his cruel purpos nolde stente,
To tempt his wyf was set al his entente.
Whan that his doughter twelf yer was of age,
He to the court of Rome, in suche wise
Enformed of his wille, sent his message,
Comaundyng hem, such bulles to devyse,
As to his cruel purpos may suffise,
How that the pope, as for his peples reste,
Bad him to wedde another, if him leste.
I say, he bad, thay schulde countrefete
The popes bulles, makyng mencioun
That he hath leve his firste wyf to lete,
As by the popes dispensacioun,
To stynte rancour and discencioun
Bitwix his peple and him; thus sayde the bulle,
The which thay han publisshid atte fulle.
The rude poepel, as it no wonder is,
Wende ful wel that it hadde be right so.
But whan these tydynges come to Grisildis,
I deeme that hir herte was ful wo;
But sche y-like sad for evermo
Disposid was, this humble creature,
Thadversité of fortun al tendure;
Abydyng ever his lust and his plesaunce,
To whom that sche was yive, hert and al,
As to hir verray worldly suffisaunce.
But schortly if I this story telle schal,

This marquys writen hath in special
A letter, in which he schewith his entente.
And secrely he to Boloyne it sente.
To therl of Panyk, which that hadde tho
Weddid his suster, prayd he specially
To brynge hom ayein his children tuo
In honurable estaat al openly.
But oon thing he him prayde outerly,
That he to no wight, though men wold enquere,
Schulde not tellen whos children thay were,
But saye the mayde schuld i-weddid be
Unto the markys of Saluce anoon.
And as this eorl was prayd, so dede he,
For at day set, he on his way is goon
Toward Saluce, and lordes many oon
In riche array, this mayden for to guyde,
Hir yonge brother rydyng by hir syde.
Arrayed was toward hir mariage
This freisshe may al ful of gemmes clere;
Hir brother, which that seven yer was of age,
Arrayed eek ful freissh in his manere;
And thus in gret noblesse and with glad chere
Toward Saluces schapyng her journay,
Fro day to day thay ryden in her way.

INCIPIT PARS QUINTA.

AMONG al this, after his wikked usage,
This marquis yit his wif to tempte more
To the uttrest proef of hir corrage,
Fully to han experiens and lore,
If that sche were as stedefast as byfore,

He on a day in open audience
Ful boystously hath sayd hir this sentence.
'Certes, Grisildes, I had y-nough plesaunce
To have yow to my wif, for your goodnesse,
And for youre trouthe, and for your obeissaunce,
Nought for your lignage, ne for your richesse;
But now know I in verray sothfastnesse,
That in gret lordschip, if I wel avyse,
Ther is gret servitude in sondry wyse;
I may not do, as every ploughman may;
My poeple me constreignith for to take
Another wyf, and *crien* day by day;
And eek the pope, rancour for to slake,
Consentith it, that dar I undertake;
And trewely, thus moche I wol yow saye,
My newe wif is comyng by the waye.
'Be strong of hert, and voyde anoon hir place,
And thilke dower that ye broughten me
Tak it agayn, I graunt it of my grace.
Retourneth to your fadres hous,' quod he,
'No man may alway have prosperité.
With even hert I rede yow endure
The strok of fortune or of adventure.'
And sche agayn answerd in pacience:
'My lord,' quod sche, 'I wot, and wist alway,
How that bitwixe your magnificence
And my poverté no wight can ne may
Make comparisoun, it is no nay;
I ne held me neuer digne in no manere
To ben your wyf, ne yit your chamberere.
'And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,
(The highe God take I for my witnesse,
And al-so wisly he my soule glade)

I never huld me lady ne maistresse,
But humble servaunt to your worthinesse,
And ever schal, whil that my lyf may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.
'That ye so longe of your benignité
Han holden me in honour and nobleye,
Wher as I was not worthy for to be,
That thonk I God and yow, to whom I preye
For-yeld it yow, ther is *no* more to seye.
Unto my fader gladly wil I wende,
And with him duelle unto my lyves ende.
'Ther I was fostred as a child ful smal,
Til I be deed my lyf ther wil I lede,
A widow clene in body, hert, and al;
For sith I yaf to yow my maydenhede,
And am your trewe wyf, it is no drede,
God schilde such a lordes wyf to take
Another man to housbond or to make.
'And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte yow wele and prosperité;
For I wol gladly yelden hir my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For sith it liketh yow, my lord,' quod sche,
'That whilom were al myn hertes reste,
That I schal gon, I wil go whan yow leste.
'But ther as ye profre me such dowayre
As I ferst brought, it is wel in my mynde,
It were my wrecchid clothes, no thing faire,
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.
O goode God! how gentil and how kynde
Ye semede by your speche and your visage,
That day that maked was our mariage!
'But soth is sayd, algate I fynd it trewe,

For in effect it proved is on me,
Love is nought old as whan that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for noon adversité
To deyen in the caas, it schal not be
That ever in word or werk I schal repente
That I yow yaf myn hert in hol entente.
'My lord, ye wot that in my fadres place
Ye dede me strippe out of my pore wede,
And richely me cladden of your grace;
To yow brought I nought elles out of drede,
But faith, and *nakednesse*, and maydenhede;
And her agayn my clothyng I restore,
And eek my weddyng ryng for evermore.
'The remenant of your jewels redy be
Within your chambur dore dar I saufly sayn.
Naked out of my fadres hous,' quod sche,
'I com, and naked moot I torne agayn.
Al your pleisauns wold I fulfille fayn;
But yit I hope it be not youre entente,
That I smocles out of your *paleys* wente.
'Ye couthe not doon so dishonest a thing,
That thilke wombe, in which your children leye,
Schulde byforn the poeple, in my walkyng,
Be seye al bare: wherfore I yow praye
Let me not lik a worm go by the waye;
Remembre yow, myn oughne lord so deere,
I was your wyf, though I unworthy were.
'Wherfor, in guerdoun of my maydenhede,
Which that I brought and nought agayn I bere,
As vouchethsauf as yeve me to my meede
But such a smok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may wrye the wombe of here
That was your wif; and here take I my leve

Of yow, myn oughne lord, lest I yow greve.'
'The smok,' quod he, 'that thou hast on thy bak.
Let it be stille, and ber it forth with the.'
But wel unnethes thilke word he spak,
But went his way for routhe and for pité.
Byforn the folk hirselven strippith sche,
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fader house forth is sche fare.
The folk hir folwen wepyng in hir weye,
And fortune ay thay cursen as thay goon;
But sche fro wepyng kept hir eyen dreye,
Ne in this tyme word ne spak sche noon.
Hir fader, that this tyding herd anoon,
Cursede the day and tyme, that nature
Schoop him to ben a lyves creature.
For oute of doute this olde pore man
Was ever in suspect of hir mariage;
For ever he deemede, sith that it bigan,
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corrage,
Him wolde thinke that it were disparage
To his estate, so lowe for to lighte,
And voyden hire as sone as ever he mighte.
Agayns his doughter hastily *goth* he;
For he by noyse of folk knew hir comyng;
And with hir olde cote, as it might be,
He covered hir ful sorwfully wepynge;
But on hir body might he it nought bringe,
For rude was the cloth, and mor of age
By dayes fele than *at* hir mariage.
Thus with hir fader for a certeyn space
Dwellith this flour of wifly pacience,
That neyther by her wordes ne by hir face,
Byforn the folk, nor eek in her absence,

Ne schewed sche that hir was doon offence,
Ne of hir highe astaat no remembraunce
Ne hadde sche, as by hir countenaunce.
No wonder is, for in hir gret estate
Hir gost was ever in playn humilité;
Ne tender mouth, noon herte delicate,
Ne pompe, ne semblant of realté;
But ful of pacient benignité,
Discrete, and prideles, ay honurable,
And to hir housbond ever meke and stable.
Men speke of Job, and most for his humblesse,
As clerkes, whan hem lust, can wel endite,
Namely of men, but as in sothfastnesse,
Though clerkes prayse wommen but a lite,
There can no man in humblesse him acquyte
As wommen can, ne can be half so trewe
As wommen ben, but it be falle of newe.

PARS SEXTA.

ERO Boloyne is this erl of Panik y-come,
Of which the fame up-sprong to more and lasse,
And to the poeples eeres alle and some
Was couth eek, that a newe marquisesse
He with him brought, in such pomp and richesse,
That never was ther seyn with mannes ye
So noble array in al West Lombardye.
The marquys, which that schoop and knew al this,

Er this erl was come, sent his message
After thilke cely pore Grisildis;
And sche with humble hert and *glad* visage,
Not with so swollen hert in hir corrage,
Cam at his hest, and on hir knees hir sette,
And reverently and wyfly sche him grette.

'Grisild,' quod he, 'my wil is outrely,
This mayden, that schal weddid be to me,
Receyved be to morwe as really
As it possible is in myn hous to be;
And eek that every wight in his degré
Have his estaat in sittyng and servyse,
In high plesaunce, as I can devyse.

'I have no womman suffisant certeyne
The chambres for tarray in ordinance
After my lust, and therfor wold I feyne,
That thin were al such maner governaunce;
Thow knowest eek of al my plesaunce;
Though thyn array be badde, and ille byseye,
Do thou thy dever atte leste weye.'

'Nought oonly, lord, that I am glad,' quod sche,
'To don your lust, but I desire also
Yow for to serve and plese in my degré,
Withoute feyntyng, and schal evermo;
Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,
Ne schal the gost withinne myn herte stente
To love yow best with al my trewe entente.'

And with that word sche gan the hous to dighte,
And tables for to sette, and beddes make,
And peyned hir to doon al that sche mighte,
Preying the chamberers for Goddes sake
To hasten hem, and faste swepe and schake,
And sche the moste servisable of alle

Hath every chamber arrayed, and his halle.
Abouten undern gan this lord alighte,
That with him broughte these noble children tweye;
For which the peple ran to se that sighte
Of her array, so richely biseye.
And than at erst amonges hem thay seye,
That Walter was no *fool*, though that him leste
To chaunge his wyf; for it was for the beste.
For sche is fairer, as thay demen alle,
Than is Grisild, and more tender of age,
And fairer fruyt bitwen hem schulde falle,
And more plesaunt for hir high lynage,
Hir brother eek so fair was of visage,
That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesaunce,
Comending now the marquys governaunce.
O stormy poeple, unsad and ever untrewe,
And undiscret, and chaunging as a fane,
Delytyng ever in rombel that is newe,
For lik the moone ay waxe ye and wane;
Ay ful of clappyng, dere y-nough a jane,
Youre doom is fals, your constaunce yvel previth,
A ful gret fool is he that on yow leevith.
Thus sayde saad folke in that citee,
Whan that the poeple gased up and doun;
For thay were glad right for the novelté,
To have a newe lady of her toun.
No more of this now make I mencioun,
But to Grisildes agayn wol I me dresse,
And telle hir constance, and hir busynesse.
Ful busy was Grisild in every thing,
That to the feste was appertinent;
Right nought was sche abaissht of hir clothing,
Though it were ruyde, and som del eek to-rent,

But with glad cheer to the yate is sche went,
With other folk, to griete the marquisesse,
And after that doth forth hir busynesse.
With so glad chier his gestes sche receyveth,
And so connyngly everich in his degre,
That no defaute no man aparceyveth,
But ay thay wondren what sche mighte be,
That in so pover array was for to se,
And couthe such honour and reverence,
And worthily thay prayse hir prudence.
In al this mene-while sche ne stente
This mayde and eek hir brother to comende
With al hir hert in ful buxom entente,
So wel, that no man couthe hir pris amende;
But atte last whan that these lordes wende
To sitte doun to mete, he gan to calle
Grisild, as sche was busy in his halle.
'Grisyld,' quod he, as it were in his play,
'How likith the my wif and hir beauté?'
'Right wel, my lord,' quod sche, 'for in good fay,
A fairer saugh I never noon than sche.
I pray to God yive hir prosperité;
And so hope I, that he wol to yow sende
Plesaunce ynough unto your lyves ende.
'On thing warn I yow and biseke also,
That ye ne prike with no tormentynge
This tendre mayden, as ye have do mo;
For sche is fostrid in hir norischinge
More tendrely, and to my supposynge
Sche couthe not adversité endure,
As couthe a pore fostrid creature.'
And whan this Walter saugh hir pacience,
Hir glade cheer, and no malice at al,

And he so oft hadde doon to hir offence,
And sche ay sad and constant as a wal,
Continuyng ever hir innocence overal,
This sturdy marquys gan his herte dresse
To rewen upon hir wyfly stedefastnesse.
'This is ynough, Grisilde myn,' quod he,
'Be now no more agast, ne yvel apayed.
I have thy faith and thy benignité,
As wel as ever womman was, assayed
In gret estate, and propreliche arrayed:
Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedefastnesse;
And hir in armes took, and gan hir kesse.
And sche for wonder took of it no keepe;
Sche herde not what thing he to hir sayde,
Sche ferd as sche hadde stert out of a sleepe,
Til sche out of hir masidnesse abrayde.
'Grisild,' quod he, 'by God that for us deyde,
Thou art my wyf, ne noon other I have,
Ne never had, as God my soule save.
'This is my doughter, which thou hast supposed
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Schal be myn heir, as I have ay purposed;
Thow bar hem in thy body trewely.
At Boloyne have I kept him prively;
Tak hem agayn, for now maistow not seye,
That thou hast lorn noon of thy children tweye.
'And folk, that other weyes han seyd of me,
I warn hem wel, that I have doon this deede
For no malice, ne for no cruelté,
But for tassaye in the thy wommanhede;
And not to slen my children, (God forbede!)
But for to kepe hem prively and stille,
Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wil.'

Whan sche this herd, aswone doun sche fallith
For pitous joy, and after her swownyng
Sche bothe hir yonge children to hir callith,
And in hir armes pitously wepyng
Embraseth hem, and tenderly kissyng,
Ful lik a moder with hir salte teris
Sche bathide bothe hir visage and hir eeris.

O, such a pitous thing it was to see
Her swownyng, and hir humble vois to heere!
'*Graunt mercy*, lord, God thank it yow,' quod sche,
'That ye han *saved me* my childern deere.
Now rek I never to be deed right here,
Sith I stond in your love and in your grace,
No fors of deth, ne whan my spirit pace.

'O tender deere yonge children myne,
Youre woful moder wende stedefastly,
That cruel houndes or som foul vermyne
Had eten yow; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tenderly
Hath doon yow kepe.' And in that same stounde
Al sodeinly sche swapped doun to grounde.

And in hir swough so sadly holdith sche
Hir children tuo, whan sche gan hem tembrace
That with gret sleight and gret difficulté
The children from her arm they gonne arace.
O! many a teer on many a pitous face
Doun ran of hem that stooden hir bisyde,
Unnethe aboute hir mighte thay abyde.

Waltier hir gladith, and hir sorwe slakith,
Sche rysith up abaisshed from hir traunce,
And every wight hir joy and feste makith,
Til sche hath caught agayn hir continaunce.
Wauter hir doth so faithfully plesaunce,

That it was daynté *for* to see the cheere
Bitwix hem tuo, now thay be met in feere.
These ladys, whan that thay her tyme saye,
Han taken hir, and into chambre goon,
And strippen hir out of hir rude arraye,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte schon,
With a coroun of many a riche stoon
Upon hir heed, thay into halle hir broughte;
And ther sche was honoured as hir oughte.
Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende;
For every man and womman doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to despende,
Til on the welken schon the sterres brighte;
For more solempne in every mannes sighte
This feste was, and gretter of costage,
Than was the revel of hir mariage.
Ful many a yer in heigh prosperité
Lyven these tuo in concord and in rest,
And richeliche his doughter maried he
Unto a lord, on of the worthiest
Of al Ytaile, and thanne in pees and rest
His wyves fader in his court he kepith,
Til that the soule out of his body crepith.
His sone succedith in his heritage,
In rest and pees, after his fader day;
And fortunat was eek in mariage,
Al put he not his wyf in gret assay.
This world is not so strong, it is no nay,
As it hath ben in olde tymes yore,
And herknith, what this auctor saith therfore.
This story is sayd, nat for that wyves scholde
Folwe Grisild, as in humilité,
For it were importable, though they wolde;

But for that every wight in his degré
Schulde be constant in adversité.
As was Grisild, therfore Petrark writeth
This story, which with high stile he enditeth.
For *sith* a womman was so pacient
Unto a mortal man, wel more us oughte
Receyven al in gre that God us sente.
For grete skilis he prove*th* that he wroughte,
But he ne temptith no man that he boughte,
As saith seint Jame, if ye his pistil rede;
He provith folk al day, it is no drede;
And suffrith us, as for our exercise,
With scharpe scourges of adversité
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
Nought for to knowe oure wille, for certes he,
Er we were born, knew al our frelté;
And for oure best is al his governaunce;
Leet us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.
But oo word, lordes, herkneth er I go:
It were ful hard to fynde now a dayes
As Grisildes in al a toun.thre or tuo;
For if that thay were put to such assayes,
The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes
With bras, that though the coyn be fair at ye,
It wolde rather brest in tuo than plye.
For which heer, for the wyves love of Bathe,—
Whos lyf and alle of hir secte God meyntene
In high maistry, and elles were it scathe,—
I wil with lusty herte freisch and grene,
Saye yow a song to glade yow, I wene;
And lat us stynt of ernestful matiere.
Herknith my song, that saith in this manere.

L'ENVOYE DE CHAUCER.

RISILD is deed, and eek hir pacience,
And bothe at oones buried in Itayle;
For whiche I crye in open audience,
No weddid man so hardy be to assayle
His wyves pacience, in hope to fynde
Grisildes, for in certeyn he schal fayle.

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
Let noon humilité your tonges nayle;
Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of yow a story of such mervayle,
As of Grisildes, pacient and kynde,
Lest Chichivache yow swolwe in hir entraile.

Folwith ecco, that holdith no silence,
But ever answereth at the countretayle;
Beth nought bydaffed for your innocence,
But scharply tak on yow the governayle;
Empryntith wel this lessoun on your mynde,
For comun profyt, sith it may avayle.

Ye archewyves, stondith at defens,
Syn ye ben strong, as is a greet chamayle,
Ne suffre not that men yow don offens.
And sclendre *wives*, felle as in batayle,
Beth egre as is a tyger yond in Inde;
Ay clappith as a mylle, I yow counsaile.

Ne drede hem not, do hem no reverence,
For though thin housbond armed be in mayle,
The arwes of thy crabbid eloquence
Schal perse his brest, and eek his adventayle:
In gelousy I rede eek thou him bynde,

And thou schalt make him couche as doth a quayle.
If thou be fair, ther folk ben in presence
Schew thou thy visage and thin apparaile;
If thou be foul, be fre of thy despense,
To gete the frendes do ay thy travayle;
Be ay of chier as light as lef on lynde,
And let hem care and wepe, and wryng and wayle.

PROLOGE OF THE MARCHAUNDES TALE

WEPYNG and wailyng, care and other sorwe
I knowe ynough, bothe on even and on morwe;
Quod the Marchaund, 'and so doon other mo,
That weddid ben; I trowe that it be so,
For wel I woot it fareth so with me.
I have a wyf, the worste that may be,
For though the feend to hir y-coupled were,
Sche wold him overmacche I dar wel swere.
What schuld I yow reherse in special
Hir high malice? sche is a schrewe at al.
Ther is a long and a large difference
Betwix Grisildes grete pacience,
And of my wyf the passyng cruelté.
Were I unbounden, al-so mot I the,
I wolde never eft come in the snare.
We weddid men lyve in sorwe and care,
Assay it who-so wil, and he schal fynde
That I say soth, by seint Thomas of Inde,
As for the more part, I say not alle;
God schilde that it scholde so byfalle.
A! good sir host, I have y-weddid be
Thise monethes tuo, and more not, pardé;
And yit I trowe that he, that al his lyve
Wyfles hath ben, though that men wold him rive
Unto the hert, ne couthe in no manere
Tellen so moche sorwe, as I now heere

Couthe telle of my wyfes cursednesse.'
'*Now*,' quod our ost, 'Marchaunt, so God yow blesse!
Sin ye so moche knowen of that art,
Ful hertily tellith us a part.'
'Gladly,' quod he, '*but* of myn oughne sore
For sory hert I telle may na more.'

THE MARCHAUNDES TALE.

WHILOM ther was dwellyng in Lombardy
A worthy knight, that born was of Pavy,
In which he lyved in gret prosperité;
And fourty yer a wifes man was he,
And folwed ay his bodily delyt
On wommen, ther *as* was his appetyt,
As doon these fooles that ben seculere.
And whan that he was passed *sixty* yere,
Were it for holyness or for dotage,
I can not say, but such a gret corrage
Hadde this knight to ben a weddid man,
That day and night he doth al that he can
Taspye wher that he mighte weddid be;
Praying our Lord to graunte him, that he
Might oones knowen of that blisful lif
That is bitwix an housbond and his wyf,
And for to lyve under that holy bond
With which God first man to womman bond.

'Noon other lif,' sayd he, 'is worth a bene;
For wedlok is so holy and so clene,
That in this world it is a paradis.'
Thus sayde this olde knight, that was so wys.
And certeinly, as soth as God is king,
To take a wyf is a glorious thing,
And namely whan a man is old and hoor,
Than is a wyf the fruyt of his tresor;
Than schuld he take a yong wif and a fair,
On which he might engendre him an hair,
And lede his lyf in mirthe and solace,
Wheras these bachileres synge allas,
Whan that thay fynde eny adversité
In love, which is but childes vanité.
And trewely it sit wel to be so,
That bachilers have ofte peyne and wo;
On brutil ground thay bulde, *and* brutelnesse
Thay fynde, whan thay wene sikernesse;
Thay lyve but as a brid other as a best,
In liberté and under noon arrest;
Ther as a weddid man, in his estate,
Lyvith his lif blisful and ordinate,
Under the yok of mariage i-bounde,
Wel may his herte in joye and blisse abounde;
For who can be so buxom as a wyf?
Who is so trewe and eek so ententyf
To kepe him, seek and hool, as is his make?
For wele or woo sche wol him not forsake.
Sche is not wery him to love and serve,
Theigh that he lay bedred til that he sterve.
And yet som clerkes seyn it is not so,
Of whiche Theofrast is oon of tho.
What fors though Theofraste liste lye?

Ne take no wif, quod he, for housbondrye,
As for to spare in houshold thy dispense;
A trewe servaunt doth more diligence
Thy good to kepe, than thin oughne wif,
For sche wol clayme half part in al hir life.
And if that thou be seek, so God me save,
Thyne verray frendes or a trewe knave
Wol kepe the bet than sche that waytith ay
After thy good, and hath doon many a day.
And if that thou take a wif, be war
Of oon peril, which declare I ne dar.
This entent, and an hundrid sithe wors,
Writith this man, ther God his bones curs.
But take no keep of al such vanité;
Deffy Theofrast, and herkne me.
A wyf is Goddes yifte verrayly;
Al other maner yiftes hardily,
As landes, rentes, pasture, or comune,
Or other moeblis, ben yiftes of fortune,
That passen as a schadow on a wal.
But dred not, if I playnly telle schal,
A wyf wil last and in thin hous endure,
Wel lenger than the lust peradventure.
Mariage is a ful gret sacrament;
He which hath no wif I hold him schent;
He lyveth helples, and is al desolate
(I speke of folk in seculer estate).
And herken why, I say not this for nought,
That womman is for mannes help i-wrought.
The heighe God, whan he had Adam maked,
And saugh him *al* aloone body naked,
God of his grete goodnes sayde thanne,
Let us now make an helpe to this manne

Lyk to himself; and than he made Eve.
Her may ye see, and here may ye preve,
That wyf is mannes help and his comfort,
His paradis terrestre and his desport.
So buxom and so vertuous is sche,
Thay mosten neede lyve in unité;
O fleisch thay ben, and on blood, as I gesse,
Have but oon hert in wele and in distresse.
A wyf? a! seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
How might a man have eny adversité
That hath a wyf? certes I can not saye.
The joye that is betwixen hem twaye.
Ther may no tonge telle or herte thinke.
If he be pore, sche helpith him to swynke;
Sche kepith his good, and wastith never a del;
And al that her housbond list, sche likith it wel;
Sche saith nought oones nay, whan he saith ye;
Do this, saith he; al redy, sir, saith sche.
O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious!
Thou art so mery, and eek so vertuous,
And so comendid, and approved eek,
That every man that holt him worth a leek,
Upon his bare knees ought al his lyf
Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wif,
Or praye to God oon him for to sende
To be with him unto his lyves ende.
For than his lyf is set in sikernesse;
He may not be deceyved, as I gesse,
So that he worche after his wyfes red;
Than may be boldely bere up his heed,
Thay ben so trewe, and also so wyse,
For whiche, if thou wolt do as the wyse,
Do alway so, as womman wol the rede.

Lo how that Jacob, as the clerkes rede,
By good counseil of his moder Rebecke,
Band the kydes skyn aboute his nekke;
For which his fader benesoun he wan.
Lo Judith, as the story telle can,
By wys counseil sche Goddes poepel kepte,
And slough him Oliphernus whil he slepte.
Lo Abygaille, by good counseil how sche
Savyd hir housbond *Nabal*, whan that he
Schold han ben slayn. And loke, *Hester* also
By good counseil delivered out of wo
The poeple of God, and made him *Mardoche*
Of Assuere enhaunsed for to be.
Ther nys no thing in gre superlatif
(As saith Senec) above an humble wyf.
Suffre thy wyves tonge, as Catoun byt,
She schal comaunde, and thou schalt suffre it,
And yit sche wil obeye of curtesye.
A wif is keper of thin housbondrye:
Wel may the sike man wayle and wepe,
Ther as ther is no wyf the hous to kepe.
I warne the, if wisly thou wilt wirche,
Love wel thy wyf, as Crist *loveth* his chirche;
If thou lovest thiself, thou lovest thy wyf.
No man hatith his fleissch, but in his lif
He fostrith it, and therfore warne I the
Cherissh thy wyf, or thou schalt never the.
Housbond and wif, what *so* men jape or pleye,
Of worldly folk holden the righte weye;
Thay ben so knyt, ther may noon harm bytyde,
And nameliche upon the wyves syde.
For which this January, of which I tolde,
Considered hath inwith his dayes olde

The lusty lif, the vertuous quiete,
That is in mariage honey-swete.
And for his frendes on a day he sente
To tellen hem theffect of his entente.
With face sad, he hath hem this tale told;
He sayde, 'Frendes, I am hoor and old,
And almost (God woot) at my pittes brinke,
Upon my soule som-what most I thynke.
I have my body folily dispendid,
Blessed be God that it schal be amendid;
For I wil be certeyn a weddid man,
And that anoon in al the hast I can,
Unto som mayde, fair and tender of age.
I pray yow helpith for my mariage
Al sodeynly, for I wil not abyde;
And I wil fonde tespien on my syde,
To whom I may be weddid hastily.
But for als moche as ye ben mo than I,
Ye schul rather such a thing aspien
Than I, and wher me lust best to allien.
But oo thing warne I yow, my frendes deere,
I wol noon old wyf have in no manere;
Sche schal not passe sixtene yer certayn.
Old fleisch and young fleisch, that wold I have ful fayn.
Bet is,' quod he, 'a pyk than a pikerel,
And bet than olde boef is the tendre vel.
I wil no womman twenty yer of age,
It nys but bene-straw and gret forage.
And eek these olde wydewes (God it woot)
Thay can so moche craft of Wades boot,
So moche broken harm whan that hem list,
That with hem schuld I never lyven in rest.
For sondry scolis maken subtil clerkes;

Womman of many a scole half a clerk is.
But certeyn, a yong thing may men gye,
Right as men may warm wax with hondes plye.
Wherfor I say yow plenerly in a clause,
I wil noon old wyf han right for that cause.
For if so were I hadde so meschaunce,
That I in hir ne couthe have no plesaunce,
Then schuld I lede my lyf in advoutrie,
And go streight to the devel whan I dye.
Ne children schuld I noon upon hir geten;
Yet were me lever houndes had*de* me eten,
Than that myn heritage schulde falle
In straunge hond; and thus I telle yow alle.
I doute not, I wot the cause why
Men scholde wedde; and forthermor woot I,
Ther spekith many man of mariage,
That wot nomore of it than wot my page
For whiche causes man schulde take a wyf.
If he ne may not chast be by his lif,
Take him a wif with gret devocioun,
Bycause of lawful procreacioun
Of children, to thonour of God above,
And not oonly for paramour and for love;
And for thay schulde leccherye eschiewe,
And yeld oure dettes whan that it is due;
Or for that ilk man schulde helpen other
In meschief, as a suster schal to the brother,
And lyve in chastité ful hevenly.
But, sires, by your leve, that am not I,
For God be thanked, I dar make avaunt,
I fele my lemys stark and suffisaunt
To doon al that a man bilongeth unto;
I wot my selve best what I may do.

'Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tree,
That blossemith er that the fruyt i-waxe be,
A blossemy tre is neither drye ne deed;
I fele me no-wher hoor but on myn heed.
Myn herte and *alle* my lymes ben as greene,
As laurer thurgh the yeer is for to seene.
And synnes ye han herd al myn entente,
I pray yow to my wille *that* ye assente.'
Diverse men diversly him tolde
Of mariage many ensamples olde;
Some blamed it, some praised it certayn;
But atte laste, schortly for to sayn,
(As alday fallith altercacioun,
Bitwixe frendes in despitesoun)
Ther fel a strif bitwen his bretheren tuo,
Of which that oon was clepid Placebo,
Justinus sothly cleped was that other.
Placebo sayde: 'O January, brother,
Ful litel need had*de* ye, my lord so deere,
Counseil to axe of eny that is heere;
But that ye ben so ful of sapience,
That yow ne likith for your heigh prudence
To wayve fro the word of Salamon.
This word, said he, unto us everychoon:
Werk al thing by counsail, thus sayd he,
And thanne schaltow nought repente the.
But though that Salamon speke such a word,
Myn owne deere brother and my lord,
So wisly God bring my soule at ese and rest,
I holde your oughne counseil is the best.
For, brother myn, of me tak this motif,
I have now ben a court-man al my lyf,
And God wot, though that I unworthy be,

I have standen in ful gret degre
Abouten lordes in ful high estat;
Yit had I never with noon of hem debaat,
I never hem contraried trewely.
I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
What that he saith, I hold it ferm and stable,
I say the same, or elles thing semblable.
A ful gret fool is eny counselour,
That servith any lord of high honour,
That dar presume, or oones thenken it,
That his counseil schulde passe his lordes wit.
Nay, lordes ben no fooles by my fay.
Ye have your self y-spoken heer to day
So heigh sentens, so holly, and so wel,
That I consente, and conferme every del
Your wordes alle, and youre oppinioun.
By God ther is no man in al this toun
Ne in Ytaile, couthe better have sayd;
Crist holdith him of this ful wel apayd.
And trewely it is an heigh corrage
Of any man that stoupen is in age,
To take a yong wyf, by my fader kyn;
Your herte hongith on a joly pyn.
Doth now in this matier right as yow leste,
For fynally I hold it for the beste.'
Justinus, that ay stille sat and herde,
Right in this wise he to Placebo answerde.
'Now, brother myn, be pacient I yow pray,
Syns ye have sayd, and herknith what I say:
Senek amonges other wordes wyse
Saith, that a man aught him wel avyse,
To whom he yiveth his lond or his catel.
And syns I aught avyse me right wel,

To whom I yive my good away fro me,
Wel more I aught avised for to be
To whom I yive my body; for alwey
I warn yow wel it is no childes pley
To take a wyf withoute avisement.
Men most enquere (this is myn assent)
Wher sche be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe,
Or proud, or eny other way a schrewe,
A chyder, or a wastour of thy good,
Or riche or pore, or elles man is wood.
Al be it so, that no man fynde schal
Noon in this world, that trotlith hool in al,
Neyther man, ne best, such as men can devyse.
But natheles it aught y-nough suffise
With any wyf, if so were that sche hadde
Mo goode thewes than hir vices badde;
And al this askith leyser to enquere.
For God woot, I have weped many a tere
Ful prively, syns I have had a wyf.
Prayse who so wil a weddid mannes lif,
Certes I fynd in it but cost, and care,
And observaunce of alle blisses bare.
And yit, God woot, myn neighebours aboute,
And namely of wommen many a route,
Sayn that I have the moste stedefast wyf,
And eek the meekest oon that berith lyf;
But I woot best, wher wryngith me my scho.
Ye maye for me right as yow liste do.
Avysith yow, ye ben a man of age,
How that ye entren into mariage;
And namly with a yong wif and a fair.
By Him that made water, eorthe, and air,
The yongest man, that is in al this route,

Is busy ynough to bring it wel aboute
To have his wif alloone, trustith me;
Ye schul not please hir fully yeres thre,
This is to saye, to doon hir ful plesaunce.
A wyf axith ful many an observaunce.
I pray yow that ye be not evel apayd.'
'Wel,' quod this January, 'and hastow sayd?
Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbis!
I *counte* nought a panyer ful of herbes
Of scole termes; wiser men than thow,
As I have sayd, assenten her right now
Unto my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?'
'I say it is a cursed man,' quod he,
'That lettith matrimoigne sicurly.'
And with that word thay rysen up sodeinly,
And ben assented fully, that he scholde
Be weddid whan him lust, and wher he wolde.
The fantasy and the curious busynesse
Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse
Of January aboute his mariage.
Many a fair schap, and many a fair visage,
Ther passith thorugh his herte night by night
As who so took a mirrour polissched bright,
And set it in a comun market place,
Than schuld he se many a figure pace
By his mirour; and in the same wise
Gan January in his thought devyse
Of maydens, which that dwellid him bisyde;
He wiste not where that he might abyde.
For though that oon have beauté in hir face,
Another stant so in the poeples grace
For hir sadness and hir benignité,
That of the poeple grettest vois hath schc;

And som were riche and hadde badde name.
But natheles, bitwix ernest and game,
He atte last appoynted him anoon,
And let al other fro his herte goon,
And ches hir of his oughne auctorité,
For love is blynd al day, and may not se.
And whan he was into the bedde brought,
He purtrayed in his hert and in his thought
Hir freische beauté, and hir age tendre,
Hir myddel smal, hir armes long and sclendre,
Hir wise governaunce, hir gentilesse,
Hir wommanly beryng, and hir sadnesse.

And whan that he on hir was condescendid,
Him thought his chois mighte nought ben amendid:
For whan that he himself concludid hadde,
Him thought ech other mannes *witte* so badde,
That impossible it were to repplie
Agayn his choys: this was his fantasie.
His frendes sent he to, at his instaunce,
And prayed hem to doon him that plesaunce,
That hastily thay wolde to him come;
He wold abrigge her labour alle and some.
Nedith no more for him to gon ne ryde,
He was appoynted ther he wold abyde.
Placebo cam, and eek his frendes soone,
And althirfirst he bad hem alle a boone,
That noon of hem noon argumentis make
Agayn the purpos which that he had*de* take;
Which purpos was plesaunt to God, sayd he,
And verray ground of his prosperité.

He sayde, ther was a mayden in the toun,
Which that of beauté hadde gret renoun,
Al were it so, sche were of smal degre,

Suffisith him hir *youthe* and hir beauté;
Which mayde, he sayd, he wold have to his wyf,
To lede in ease and holinesse his lyf;
And thankede God, that he might have hir al,
That no wight with his blisse parten schal;
And preyed hem to laboure in this neede,
And schapen that he faile not to speede.
For than he sayd, his spirit was at ease;
'Than is,' quod he, 'no thing may me displease,
Save oon thing prikkith in my conscience,
The which I wil reherse in your presence.
I have herd sayd,' quod he, 'ful yore ago,
Ther may no man have parfyt blisses tuo,
This is to say, in erthe and eek in hevene.
For though he kepe him fro the synnes sevene,
And eek from ylk a braunche of thilke tre,
Yit is ther so parfyt felicité
And so gret ease and lust in mariage,
That ever I am agast now in myn age,
That I schal lede now so mery a lyf,
So delicat, withoute wo and stryf,
That I schal have myn heven in erthe heere.
For sith that verrey heven is bought so deere
With tribulacioun and gret penaunce,
How schuld I thanne, that live in such plesaunce
As alle wedded men doon with her wyves,
Come to blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve is?
This is my drede, and ye, my bretheren tweye,
Assoilith me this questioun, I yow preye.'
Justinus, which that hated his folye,
Answerd anoon right in his japerie;
And for he wold his longe tale abrigge,
He wolde noon auctorité alegge,

But sayde, 'Sir, so ther be noon obstacle
Other than this, God of his high miracle,
And of his mercy may so for yow wirche,
That er ye have your rightes of holy chirche
Ye may repente of weddid mannes lyf,
In which ye sayn ther is no wo ne stryf;
And ellis God forbede, but he sente
A weddid man grace him to repente
Wel ofte, rather than a sengle man.
And therfor, sire, the beste reed I can,
Dispaire yow nought, but have in youre memorie,
Peradventure she may be your purgatorie;
Sche may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
Than schal your soule up to heven skippe
Swyfter than doth an arwe out of a bowe.
I hope to God herafter ye shuln knowe,
That ther nys noon so gret felicité
In mariage, ne nevermor schal be,
That you schal lette of your savacioun,
So that ye use, as skile is and resoun,
The lustes of your wyf attemperely,
And that ye please hir not to amorously;
And that ye kepe yow eek from other synne.
My tale is doon, for my witt is thynne.
Beth not agast hereof, my brother deere,
But let us waden out of this matiere.
The wif of Bathe, if ye han understonde,
Of mariage, which ye han now in honde,
Declared hath ful wel in litel space:
Fareth now wel, God have yow in his grace.'

And with that word this Justinus and his brother
Han tak her leve, and ech of hem of other.
And whan they saughe that it moste needis be,

Thay wroughten so by sleight and wys treté,
That sche this mayden, which that Mayus hight*e*,
As hastily as ever that sche might*e*,
Schal weddid be unto this Januarie.
I trow it were to longe yow to tarie.
If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond,
By which that sche was feoffed in his lond;
Or for to herken of hir riche array.
But finally y-comen is that day,
That to the chirche bothe ben thay went,
For to receyve the holy sacrement.
Forth comth the preost, with stoole about his necke,
And bad hir be lik Sarra and Rebecke
In wisdom and in trouth of mariage;
And sayd his orisouns, as is usage,
And crouched hem, and bad God schuld hem blesse
And made al secur ynowgh with holinesse.
Thus ben thay weddid with solempnité;
And atte fest sittith he and sche
With othir worthy folk upon the deys.
Al ful of joy and blis is that paleys.
And ful of instrumentz, and of vitaile,
The moste deintevous of al Ytaile.
Biforn hem stood such instruments of soun,
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioun,
Ne maden never such a melodye.
At every cours ther cam loud menstraleye,
That never tromped Joab for to heere,
Ne he Theodomas yit half so cleere
At Thebes, whan the cite was in doute.
Bachus the wyn hem schenchith al aboute,
And Venus laughith upon every wight,
(For January was bycome hir knight,

And wolde bothe assayen his corrage
In liberté and eek in mariage)
And with hir fuyrbrond in hir hond aboute
Daunceth bifore the bryde and al the route.
And certeynly I dar right wel saye this,
Imeneus, that god of weddyng is,
Seigh never his lif so mery a weddid man.
Holde thy pees, thow poete Marcian,
That writest us that ilke weddyng merye
Of hir Philologie and *him* Mercurie,
And of the songes that the Muses songe;
To smal is bothe thy penne and eek thy tonge
For to descrive of this mariage.
Whan tender youthe hath weddid stoupyng age,
Ther is such mirthe that it may not be write;
Assaieth it your self, than may ye wyte
If that I lye or noon in this mateere.
Mayus, that sit with so benigne a cheere,
Hir to bihold it semede fayerye;
Queen Esther lokede never with such an ye
On Assuere, so meke a look hath sche;
I may not yow devyse al hir beauté;
But thus moche of hir beauté telle I may,
That sche was lyk the brighte morw of May,
Fulfild of alle beauté and plesaunce.
  This January is ravyscht in a traunce,
At every tyme he lokith in hir face,
But in his hert he gan hir to manace,
That he that night in armes wold hir streyne
Harder than ever Paris did Eleyne.
But natheles yit had he gret pité
That thilke night offenden hir most he,
And thought: 'Alas! O tendre creature,

Now wolde God ye mighte wel endure
Al my corrage, it is so scharp and keene;
I am agast ye schul it not susteene.
For God forbede, that I dede al my might.
Now wolde God that it were woxe night,
And that the night wolde stonden evermo.
I wolde that al this poeple were ago.'
And fynally he doth al his labour,
As he best mighte, savyng his honour,
To hast hem from the mete in subtil wise.

The tyme cam that resoun was to ryse,
And after that men daunce, and drynke faste,
And spices al about the hous thay caste,
And ful of joy and blis is every man,
Al but a squier, that hight Damyan,
Which karf to-for the knight ful many a day;
He was so ravyssht on his lady May,
That for the verray peyne he was nigh wood:
Almost he swelt and swowned as he stood;
So sore hath Venus hurt him with hir brond,
As that sche bar it daunsyng in hir hond.
And to his bed he went him hastily;
No more of him as at this tyme telle I;
But ther I lete him now his wo compleyne,
Til freisshe May wol rewen on his peyne.
O perilous fuyr, that in the bed-straw bredith!
O famuler fo, that his service bedith!
O servaunt traitour, false homly hewe,
Lyk to the nedder *sleighe* in bosom untrewe,
God schild us alle from your acqueintance!
O January, dronken in plesaunce
Of mariage, se how thy Damyan,
Thyn oughne squier and thy borne man,

Entendith for to do the vilonye;
God graunte the thin homly fo espye.
For in this world nys worse pestilence
Than homly foo, alday in thy presence.
Parfourmed hath the sonne his ark diourne,
No lenger may the body of him sojourne
On thorisonte, as in *that* latitude;
Night with his mantel, that is derk and rude,
Gan oversprede themesperie aboute;
For which departed is the *lusti* route
Fro January, with thank on every side.
Hoom to her houses lustily thay ryde,
Wher as they doon her thinges, as hem leste,
And whan they seigh her tyme thay goon to reste.
Soone after that this hasty Januarie
Wolde go to bed, he wolde no lenger tarie.
He drinkith ypocras, clarre, and vernage
Of spices hote, to encrese his corrage;
And many a letuary had he ful fyn,
Such as the cursed monk daun Constantin
Hath writen in his book *de Coitu;*
To ete hem alle he *wolde* no thing eschieu.
And to his privé frendes thus sayd he:
'For Goddes love, as soon as it may be,
Let voyden al this hous in curteys wise.'
And thay han doon right as he wolde devyse.
Men drinken, and the travers drawe anoon;
The bruyd was brought abedde as stille as stoon;
And whan the bed was with the prest i-blessid,
Out of the chambre hath every wight him dressed.
And January hath fast in armes take
His freisshe May, his paradys, his make.
He lullith hir, he kissith hir ful ofte;

With thikke bristlis on his berd unsofte,
Lik to the skyn of houndfisch, scharp as brere,
(For he was schave al newe in his manere)
He rubbith hir about hir tendre face,
And sayde thus: 'Allas! I mot trespace
To yow, my spouse, and yow gretly offende,
Or tyme come that I wol doun descende;
But natheles considerith this,' quod he,
'Ther nys no werkmen, whatsoever he be,
That may bothe werke wel and hastily;
This wol be doon at leysir parfitly.
It is no fors how longe that we pleye;
In trewe wedlock coupled be we tweye;
And blessed be the yok that we ben inne,
For in our actes we mowe do no synne.
A man may do no synne with his wif,
Ne hurt himselven with his oughne knyf:
For we han leve to play us by the lawe.'
Thus laborith he, til that the day gan dawe,
And than he takith a sop in fyn clarré,
And upright in his bed than sittith he.
And after that he song ful lowd and cleré,
And kissed his wyf, and made wantoun cheere.
He was al coltissch, ful of ragerye,
And ful of jargoun, as a flekked pye.
The slakke skyn about his nekke *schaketh*,
Whil that he song, so chaunteth he and craketh.
But God wot what that May thought in hir hert,
Whan sche him saugh up sittyng in his schert,
In his night-cappe, and with his nekke lene;
Sche praysith nought his pleying worth a bene.
Than sayd he thus: 'My reste wol I take
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake.'

And doun he layd his heed and sleep til prime.
And afterward, whan that he saugh his tyme,
Up riseth January, but freissche May
Holdith hir chamber unto the fourthe day,
As usage is of wyves for the best.
For every labour som tyme moot have rest,
Or elles longe may he not endure;
This is to saye, no lyves creature,
Be it *of* fissch, or brid, or best, or man.

Now wol I speke of woful Damyan,
That languyssh*eth* for love, as ye schuln here:
Therefore I speke to him in this manere.
I say, 'O sely Damyan, allas!
Answere to my demaunde, as in this caas,
How schaltow to thy lady, freissche May,
Telle thy woo? Sche wol alway saye nay;
Eek if thou speke, sche wol thy woo bywreye;
God be thin help, I can no better seye.'

This seke Damyan in Venus fuyr
So brennith, that he deyeth for desir;
For which he put his lyf in aventure,
No lenger might he in this wo endure,
But prively a penner gan he borwe,
And in a letter wrot he al his sorwe,
In maner of a compleynt or of a lay,
Unto his faire freissche lady May.
And in a purs of silk, heng on his schert,
He hath it put, and layd it at his hert.

The moone that at noon was thilke day
That January had*de* weddid freissche May
In tuo of Taure, was into Cancre gliden;
So long hath Mayus in hir chambre abiden,
As custom is unto these nobles alle.

A bryde schal not eten in the halle,
Til dayes foure or thre dayes atte lest
I-passed ben, than let hir go to the fest.
The fourthe day complet fro noon to noon,
Whan that the heighe masse was i-doon,
In halle sitte this January and May,
As freissch as is the brighte someres day.
And so bifelle, that this goode man
Remembrid him upon this Damyan,
And sayde, 'Seinte Mary! how may this be,
That Damyan entendith not to me?
Is he ay seek? or how may this bityde?'
His squiers, which that stoode ther bisyde,
Excusid him, bycause of his syknesse,
Which letted him to doon his busynesse;
Noon other cause mighte make him tarie.
'That me for-thinketh,' quod this Januarie;
'He is a gentil squyer, by my trouthe,
If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe.
He is as wys, discret, and eek secré,
As any man I wot of his degré,
And therto manerly and servysable,
And for to be a thrifty man right able.
But after mete, as soon as ever I may,
I wol myself visit him, and eek May,
To doon him al the confort that I can.'
And for that word him blessed every man,
That of his bounté and his gentilesse
He wolde so comfort in his seekenesse
His squyer, for it was a gentil deede.
'Dame,' quod this January, 'tak good heede,
At after-mete, ye with your wommen alle,
(Whan ye han ben in chambre out of this halle)

That alle ye goo to se this Damyan;
Doth him desport, he is a gentil man,
And tellith him that I wil him visite,
Have I no thing but rested me a lyte;
And spedith yow faste, for I wol abyde
Til that ye slepe faste by my syde.'
And with that word he gan unto him calle
A squier, that was marchal of his halle,
And told him certeyn thinges what he wolde.
This freissche May hath streight hir wey i-holde
With alle hir wommen unto Damyan.
Doun by his beddes syde sat sche than,
Comfortyng him as goodly as sche may.
This Damyan, whan that his tyme he say,
In secré wise, his purs, and eek his bille,
In which that he i-writen had his wille,
Hath put into hir hond withouten more,
Save that he siketh wonder deepe and sore,
And softely to hir right thus sayd he;
'Mercy, and that ye not discover me;
For I am deed, if that this thing *be kud*.'
This purs *hath sche in*with *hir bosom hud*,
And went hir way; ye gete no more of me;
But unto January comen is sche,
That on his beddes syde sit ful softe.
He takith hir, and kissith hir ful ofte;
And layd him doun to slepe, and that anoon.
Sche feyned hir as that sche moste goon
Ther as ye woot that every wight moot neede;
And whan sche of this bille hath taken heede,
Sche rente it al to cloutes atte laste,
And into the privy softely it caste.
Who studieth now but faire freissche May?

Adoun by olde January sche lay,
That slepith, til that the coughe hath him awaked;
Anoon he prayde stripen hir al naked.
He wold of hir, he sayd, have som plesaunce:
Hir clothis dede him, he sayde, som grevaunce.
And sche obeieth, be hir lief or loth.
But lest that precious folk be with me wroth,
How that he wroughte I dar not telle,
Or whethir it semed him paradys or helle;
But here I lete hem werken in her wise
Til evensong rong, and than thay most arise.
Whethir it be by desteny or adventure,
Were it by influence, or by nature,
Or by constellacioun, that in such estate
The heven stood that tyme fortunate,
As for to putte a *bille* of Venus werkis
(For alle thing hath tyme, as seyn these clerkis)
To eny womman for to gete hir love,
I can not saye; but grete God above,
That knowith that noon acte is causeles,
He demeth of al, for I wil holde my pees.
But soth is this, how that this freisshe May
Hath take such impressioun that day,
Of pité on this sike Damyan,
That from hir herte sche ne dryve can
The remembraunce for to doon him ease.
'Certeyn,' thought sche, 'whom that this thing displease
I rekke not, for her I him assure,
To love him best of eny creature,
Though he no more hadde than his scherte.'
Lo, pité renneth soone in gentil herte.
Heer may ye see, how excellent fraunchise

In womman is whan thay narow hem avyse.
Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many oon,
That hath an hert as hard as is a stoon,
Which wold han lete sterven in the place
Wel rather than han graunted him her grace;
And hem rejoysen in her cruel pride,
And rekken nought to ben an homicide.
This gentil May, fulfillid of pité,
Right of hir hond a letter makede sche,
In which sche grauntith him hir verray grace;
Ther lakkide nought but oonly day and place,
Wher that sche might unto his lust suffise;
For it schal be right as he wol devyse.
And whan sche saugh hir tyme upon a day
To visite this Damyan goth May,
And subtilly this lettre doun sche thruste
Under his pylow, rede it if him luste.
Sche takith him by the hond, and hard him twiste
So secrely, that no wight of it wiste,
And bad him be al hool, and forth sche wente
To January, whan that he for hir sente.
Up ryseth Damyan the nexte morwe,
Al passed was his siknes and his sorwe.
He kembith him, he pruneth him and pyketh,
He doth al that unto his lady likith;
And eek to January he goth as lowe
As ever did a dogge for the bowe.
He is so plesaunt unto every man,
(For craft is al, who so that do it can)
That every wight is fayn to speke him good;
And fully in his ladys grace he stood.
Thus lete I Damyan about his neede,
And in my tale forth I wol procede.

Some clerkes holden that felicité
Stant in delit, and therfor certeyn he
This noble January, with al his might
In honest wise as longith to a knight,
Schop him to lyve ful deliciously.
His housyng, his array, as honestly
To his degre was maked as a kynges.
Amonges other of his honest thinges
He hade a gardyn walled al with stoon,
So fair a gardyn wot I nowher noon.
For out of doute I verrely suppose,
That he that wroot the Romauns of the Rose,
Ne couthe of hit the beauté wel devyse;
Ne Priapus ne mighte not wel suffice,
Though he be god of gardyns, for to telle
The beauté of the gardyn, and the welle,
That stood under a laurer alway greene.
Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene
Preserpina, and al the fayerie,
Desporten hem and maken melodye
Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men tolde.
This noble knight, this January the olde,
Such deynté hath in it to walk and pleye,
That he wolde no wight suffre bere the keye,
Save he himself, for of the smale wyket
He bar alway of silver a smal cliket,
With which whan that him list he it unschette.
And whan he wolde pay his wyf hir dette
In somer sesoun, thider wold he go,
And May his wyf, and no wight but thay tuo;
And thinges which that weren not doon in bedde,
He in the gardyn parformed hem and spedde.
And in this wise many a mery day

Lyvede this January and freische May;
But worldly joye may not alway endure
To January, ne to no creature.
O sodeyn hap! o thou fortune unstable!
Lyk to the scorpioun so desceyvable,
That flaterist with thin heed whan thou wilt stynge;
Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin envenymynge.
O britel joye! o sweete venym queynte!
O monster, that so subtily canst peynte
Thyn yiftes, under hiew of stedfastnesse,
That thou desceyvest bothe more and lesse!
Why hastow January thus deceyved,
That haddist him for thy fulle frend receyved?
And now thou hast byreft him bothe his yen,
For sorw of which desireth he to dyen.
Allas! this noble January fre,
Amyd his lust and his prosperité
Is woxe blynd, and that al sodeynly.
He wepith and he weyleth pitously;
And therwithal, the fuyr of jalousye
(Lest that his wif schulde falle in som folye)
So brent his herte that he wolde fayn
That som man bothe hir and him hadde slayn;
For neyther after his deth, nor in his lyf,
Ne wold he that sche were love ne wyf,
But ever lyve as wydow in clothes blake,
Soul as the turtil that lost hath hir make.
But atte last, after a moneth or tweye,
His sorwe gan aswage, soth to seye.
For whan he wist it may noon other be,
He paciently took his adversité;
Save out of doute he may not forgoon,

That he nas jalous evermore in oon;
Which jalousie it was so outrageous,
That neyther in halle, ne in noon other hous,
Ne in noon other place never the mo
He nolde suffre hir to ryde or go,
But-if that he hadde hond on hir alway.
For which ful ofte wepeth friesche May,
That loveth Damyan so benignely,
That sche moot outher deyen sodeinly,
Or elles sche moot han him as hir leste;
She waytith whan hir herte wolde breste.
Upon that other syde Damyan
Bicomen is the sorwfulleste man
That ever was, for neyther night ne day
Ne might he speke a word to fressche May,
As to his purpos, of no such matiere,
But-if that January most it heere,
That had an hond upon hir evermo.
But natheles, by writyng to and fro,
And privé signes, wist he what sche mente,
And sche knew eek the fyn of his entente.
O January, what might it the availe,
If thou might see as fer as schippes saile?
For as good is blynd deceyved be,
As to be deceyved whan a man may see.
Lo, Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
For al that ever he couthe poure or prien,
Yet was he blent, as, God wot, so ben moo,
That weneth wisly that it be nought so;
Passe over is an ease, I say no more.
This freissche May, that I spak of so yore,
In warm wex hath emprynted the cliket,
That January bar of the smale wiket,

With which into his gardyn ofte he wente,
And Damyan that knew al hir entente
The cliket counterfeted prively;
Ther nys no more to saye, but hastily
Som wonder by this cliket schal betyde,
Which ye schal heeren, if ye wol abyde.

O noble Ovyde, wel soth saistow, God woot,
What sleight is it though it be long and hoot,
That he nyl fynd it out in som manere?
By Piramus and Thesbe may men leere;
Though they were kept ful longe streyt overal,
Thay ben accorded, rownyng thurgh a wal,
Ther no wight couthe han found out swich a sleight.
For now to purpos; er that dayes eyght
Were passid *of* the moneth of Juyl, bifille
That January hath caught so gret a wille,
Thorugh eggyng of his wyf, him for to pleye
In his gardyn, and no wight but *they* tweye,
That in a morwe unto this May saith he:
'Rys up, my wif, my love, my lady fre;
The turtlis vois is herd, my douve swete;
The wynter is goon, with his raynes wete.
Come forth now with thin eyghen columbine.
How fairer ben thy brestes than is the wyne.
The gardyn is enclosed al aboute:
Com forth, my swete spouse, out of doute,
Thou hast me wounded in myn hert, o wyf;
No spot *in* the knew I in al my lif.
Com forth, and let us take oure desport,
I ches the for my wyf and my comfort.'
Such olde lewed wordes used he.
On Damyan a signe made sche,
That he schulde go biforn with his cliket.

This Damyan than hath opened the wiket,
And in he stert, and that in such manere,
That no wight it mighte see nor heere,
And stille he seet under a bussch. Anoon
This January, *as* blynd as is a stoon,
With Mayus in his hond, and no wight mo,
Into his freische gardyn is ago,
And clappid*e* to the wiket sodeinly.
'Now, wyf,' quod he, 'her nys but ye and I,
Thou art the creature that I best love;
For by that Lord that sit in heven above,
Lever ich had*de* to dyen on a knyf,
Than the offende, deere trewe wyf.
For Goddes sake, thenk how I the chees,
Nought for no coveytise douteles,
But oonly for the love I had*de* to the.
And though that I be old and may not se,
Beeth trewe to me, and I wol telle yow why;
Thre thinges, certes, schul ye wynne therby;
First, love of Crist, and to your self honour,
And al myn heritage, toun and tour.
I yive it yow, makith chartres as yow leste;
This schal ben doon to morw er sonne reste
So wisly God my soule bringe in blisse!
I pray yow first in covenaunt ye me kisse.
And though that I be jalous, wyt me nought,
Ye ben so deep emprinted in my thought,
That whan that I considre your beauté,
And therwithal the unlikly eelde of me,
I may nought, certes, though I schulde dye,
Forbere to ben out of your companye
For verray love; this is withouten doute
Now kisse me, wyf, and let us rome aboute.'

This freissche May, whan sche his wordes herde,
Benignely to January answerde,
But first and forward sche bigan to wepe:
'I have,' quod sche, 'a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also myn honour,
And of my wifhod thilke tendre flour,
Which that I have ensured in your hond,
Whan that the prest to yow my body bond;
Wherfor I wil answer in this manere,
With the leve of yow, myn *owen* lord, so deere.
I pray to God that never dawe the day,
That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may,
If ever I do unto my kyn that schame,
Or elles I empaire so my name,
That I be fals; and if I do that lak,
Doth strepe me, and put me in a sak,
And in the nexte ryver do me drenche;
I am a gentil womman, and no wenche.
Why speke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewe,
And wommen han reproef of yow ever newe.
Ye have noon other contenaunce, I leve,
But speke to us of untrust and repreve.'
And with that word sche saugh wher Damyan
Sat in the buissh, and coughen sche bigan;
And with hir fyngres signes made sche,
That Damyan schulde clymb upon a tre,
That charged was with fruyt, and up he wente;
For verrayly he knew al hir entente,
And every signe that sche couthe make,
Wel bet than January hir oughne make.
For in a letter sche hadde told him al
Of this matier, how he worche schal.
And thus I lete him sitte in the pirie,

And January and May romynge mirye.
Bright was the day, and bliew the firmament;
Phebus hath of gold his stremes doun i-sent
To gladen every flour with his warmnesse;
He was that tyme in Gemines, as I gesse,
But litel fro his declinacioun
Of Canker, Joves exaltacioun.
And so bifel that brighte morwen tyde,
That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde,
Pluto, that is *the* kyng of fayerye,
And many a lady in his compaignie
Folwyng his wif, the queene Preserpina,
Whiche that he ravysched out of Cecilia,
Whil that sche gadrede floures in the mede,
(In Claudian ye maye the story rede,
How in his grisly carte he hir fette);
This king of fayry than adoun him sette
Upon a bench of turves freissh and greene,
And right anoon thus sayd he to his queene:
'My wyf,' quod he, 'ther may no wight saye nay,
Thexperiens so preveth every day,
The tresoun which that womman doth to man.
Ten hundrid thousand [stories] tellen I can
Notable of your untrouth and brutelnesse.
O Salamon, wys and richest of richesse,
Fulfild of sapiens, and of worldly glorie,
Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
To every wight, that wit and resoun can.
Thus praysith he yit the bounté of man;
Among a thousand men yit fond I oon,
But of wommen alle found I *never* noon.
Thus saith the king, that knoweth your wikkednesse,
That Jhesus, *filius* Sirac, as I gesse,

Ne spekith of yow but selde reverence.
A wild fuyr and corrupt pestilence
So falle upon your bodies yit to night!
Ne see ye not this honurable knight?
Bycause, allas! that he is blynd and old,
His owne man schal make him cokewold;
Loo, wher he sitt, the lecchour, in the tre!
Now wol I graunten, of my majesté,
Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
That he schal have ayein his eyghen sight,
Whan that his wyf wol do him vilonye;
Than schal he knowe al her harlotrye,
Bothe in reproef of her and other mo.'
'Ye schal?' quod Preserpine, 'and wol ye so?
Now by my modres *Ceres* soule I swere,
That I schal yive hir suffisaunt answere,
And alle wommen after for hir sake;
That though thay be in any gult i-take,
With face bold thay schul hemself excuse,
And bere hem doun that wolde hem accuse.
For lak of answer, noon of hem schal dyen.
Al had a man seyn a thing with bothe his yen,
Yit schul we wymmen visage it hardily,
And wepe, and swere, and chide subtilly,
So that ye men schul ben as lewed as gees:
What rekkith me of your auctoritees?
I wot wel that this Jew, this Salamon,
Fond of us wommen fooles many oon;
But though he ne fond no good womman,
Yit hath ther founde many another man
Wommen ful trewe, ful good, and vertuous;
Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous,
With martirdom thay proved her constaunce.

The Romayn gestes eek make remembraunce
Of many a verray trewe wyf also.
But, sire, be nought wrath, al be it so,
Though that he sayd he fond no good womman,
I pray yow tak the sentens of the man;
He mente thus, that in sovereign bounté
Nis noon but God, that sit in Trinité.
Ey, for verrey God that nys but oon,
What make ye so moche of Salamon?
What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
What though he were riche and glorious?
So made he eek a temple of fals godis,
How might he do a thing that more forbode is?
Pardé, als fair as ye his name emplastre,
He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,
And in his eelde he verray God forsook;
And if that God ne hadde (as saith the book)
I-spared him for his fadres sake, he scholde
Have lest his regne rather than he wolde.
I sette right nought of the vilonye,
That ye of wommen write, a boterflie;
I am a womman, needes most I speke,
Or elles swelle tyl myn herte breke.
For syn he sayde that we ben jangleresses,
As ever hool I moote brouke my tresses,
I schal not spare for no curtesye
To speke him harm, that wold us vilonye.'
'Dame,' quod this Pluto, 'be no lenger wroth,
I yive it up: but sith I swere myn oth,
That I wil graunte him his sight agein,
My word schal stonde, I warne yow certeyn;
I am a kyng, it sit me nought to lye.'
'And I, quod sche, 'am queen of faierie.

Hir answer schal sche have, I undertake;
Let us no mo wordes herof make.
Forsoth I wol no lenger yow contrarie.'
Now let us turne agayn to Januarye,
That in this gardyn with this faire May
Syngeth, ful merier than the papinjay,
'Yow love I best, and schal, and other noon.'
So long about the aleys is he goon,
Til he was come agaynes thilke pirie,
Wher as this Damyan sittith ful mirye
On heigh, among the freische leevys greene.
This freissche May, that is so bright and scheene,
Gan for to syke, and sayd, 'Allas my syde!
Now, sir,' quod sche, 'for aught that may bityde,
I most han of the peres that I see,
Or I moot dye, so sore longith me
To eten of the smale peris greene.
Help for hir love that is of heven queene!
I telle yow wel a womman in my plyt
May have to fruyt so gret an appetyt
That sche may deyen, but sche it have.'
'Allas!' quod he, 'that I nad heer a knave
That couthe climbe, allas! allas!' quod he,
'For I am blynd.' 'Ye, sire, no fors,' quod sche;
'But wolde ye vouchesauf, for Goddes sake,
The piry inwith your armes for to take,
(For wel I woot that ye mystruste me)
Than schold I clymbe wel y-nough,' quod sche,
'So I my foot mighte set upon your bak.'
'Certes,' quod he, 'theron schal be no lak,
Might I yow helpe with myn herte blood.'
He stoupith doun, and on his bak sche stood,
And caught hir by a twist, and up sche goth.

(Ladys, I pray yow that ye be not wroth,
I can not glose, I am a rude man:)
And sodeinly anoon this Damyan
Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.
And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,
To January he yaf his sight agayn,
Ne was ther never man of thing so fayn;
But on his wyf his thought was evermo.
Up to the tree he kest his eyghen tuo,
And seigh that Damyan his wyf hadde dressid
In which maner it may not ben expressid,
But-if I wolde speke uncurteisly.
And up he yaf a roryng and a cry,
As doth the moder whan the child schal dye;
'Out! help! allas! harrow!' he gan to crie;
'O stronge lady stoure, what dos thow?'
And sche answerith: 'Sire, what eylith yow?
Have paciens and resoun in your mynde,
I have yow holpen on bothe your eyen blynde.
Up peril of my soule, I schal not lyen,
As me was taught to hele with your yen,
Was nothing bet for to make yow see,
Than stroggle with a man upon a tree;
God woot, I dede it in ful good entente.'
'Stroggle!' quod he, 'ye, algat in it wente.
God yive yow bothe on schames deth to dyen!
He swyvede the; I saugh it with myn yen;
And elles be I honged by the hals.'
'Than is,' quod sche 'my medicine fals.
For certeynly, if that ye mighten see,
Ye wolde not saye tho wordes unto me.
Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfyt sighte.
'I se,' quod he, 'as wel as ever I mighte.

(Thankid be God) with bothe myn yen tuo,
And by my trouth me thought he did the so.'
'Ye mase, mase, goode sir,' quod sche;
'This thank have I for I have maad yow see;
Allas!' quod sche, 'that ever I was so kynde.'
'Now, dame,' quod he, 'let al passe out of mynde;
Com doun, my leef, and if I have myssayd,
God help me so, as I am evel appayd.
But by my fader soule, I wende have seyn,
How that this Damyan had*de* by the leyn,
And that thy smok had*de* layn upon thy breste.'
'Ye, sire,' quod sche, 'ye may wene as yow leste;
But, sire, a man that wakith out of his slep,
He may not sodeynly wel take keep
Upon a thing, ne seen it parfytly,
Til that he be adawed verrayly.
Right so a man, that long hath blynd i-be,
He may not sodeynly so wel i-se,
First whan the sight is newe comen agayn,
As he that hath a day or tuo i-sayn.
Til that your sight y-stablid be a while,
Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile.
Beth war, I pray yow, for, by heven king,
Ful many man wenith for to se a thing
And it is al another than it semeth;
He that mysconceyveth he mysdemeth.'
And with that word sche leep doun fro the tre.
This January who is glad but he?
He kissith hir, and clippith hir ful ofte,
And on hir wombe he strokith hir ful softe;
And to his paleys hom he hath hir lad.
Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad.
Thus endith her my tale of Januarye,
God blesse us, and his moder seinte Marie!

THE SQUYERES PROLOGE.

Y! Goddes mercy!' sayd our Hoste tho,
'Now such a wyf I pray God keep me fro.
Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees
In wommen ben; for ay as busy as bees
Ben thay us seely men for to desceyve,
And from a soth ever wol thay weyve.
By this Marchaundes tale it proveth wel.
But douteles, as trewe as eny steele
I have a wyf, though that sche pore be;
But of hir tonge a labbyng schrewe is sche;
And yit sche hath an heep of vices mo.
Therof no fors; let alle such thinges go.
But wite ye what? in counseil be it seyd,
Me rewith sore I am unto hir teyd;
And if I scholde reken every vice,
Which that sche hath, i-wis I were to nyce;
And cause why, it schulde reported be
And told to hir of som of this meyné,
(Of whom it needith not for to declare,
Syn wommen connen oute such chaffare);
And eek my witte suffisith nought therto
To tellen al; wherfor my tale is do.'

'Sir Squier, com forth, if that your wille be,
And say us a tale of love, for certes ye
Connen theron as moche as ony man.'

'Nay, sire,' quod he; 'but I wil say as I can
With herty wil, for I wil not rebelle

Against your wille; a tale wil I telle,
Have me excused if that I speke amys;
My wil is good; and thereto my tale is this.'

THE SQUYERES TALE.

AT Sarray, in the lond of Tartary,
Ther dwelled a kyng that werryede Russy,
Thurgh which ther deyede many a doughty man;
This nobil kyng was cleped Cambynskan,
Which in his tyme was of so gret renoun,
That ther nas nowher in no regioun
So excellent a lord in alle thing;
Him lakkede nought that longede to a kyng.
As of the secte of which *that* he was born,
He kept his lawe to which *that* he was sworn;
And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,
And pitous and just, and alway yliche,
Soth of his word, benign and honurable;
Of his corage as eny centre stable;
Yong, freisch, and strong, in armes desirous,
As eny bachiler of al his hous.
A fair person he was, and fortunat,
And kepte so wel his real astat,
That ther was nowher such a ryal man.
This noble kyng, this Tartre, this Cambynskan,
Hadde tuo sones by Elcheta his wyf,
Of which the eldest highte Algarsyf,
That other was i-cleped Camballo.

A doughter had*de* this worthi king also,
That yongest was, and highte Canacé;
But for to telle yow al hir beauté,
It lith not on my tonge, ne my connyng,
I dar nought undertake so heigh a thing;
Myn Englissh eek is insufficient,
It moste be a rethor excellent
That couth his colours longyng for that art,
If he schold hir discryve in eny part;
I am non such, I mot speke as I can.
And so bifel it, that this Cambynskan
Hath twenty wynter born his dyademe;
As he was wont fro yer to yer, I deme,
He leet the fest of his nativité
Don cryen, thurghout Sarray his cite,
The last Idus of March, after the yeer.
Phebus the sonne ful joly was and cleer,
For he was neigh his exaltacioun
In Mar*tez* face, and in his mansioun
In Aries, the colerik, the hote signe.
Ful lusty was the wedir and benigne,
For which the foules ayein the sonne scheene,
What for the sesoun and for the yonge greene,
Ful lowde song in here affeccioun*s*;
Hem semed have geten hem proteccioun*s*
Ayens the swerd of wynter kene and cold.
This Cambynskan, of which I have *yow* told,
In royal vesture, sittyng on his deys
With dyadem, ful heigh in his paleys,
And held his fest solempne and so riche,
That in this worlde *ne* was there noon it liche.
Of which if I schal tellen al tharray,
Than wold it occupie a someres day;

And eek it needith nought for to devyse
At every cours the ordre and the servyse.
I wol nat tellen of her straunge sewes,
Ne of her swannes, ne here heroun-sewes.
Ek in that lond, as tellen knightes olde,
Ther is som mete that is ful deynté holde,
That in this lond men recch of it but smal;
Ther is no man it may reporten al.
I wol not tarien you, for it is pryme,
And for it is no fruyt, but los of tyme,
Unto my purpos I wol have my recours.
That so bifelle after the thridde cours,
Whil that the kyng sit thus in his nobleye,
Herkyng his mynstrales her thinges pleye
Byforn him atte boord deliciously,
In atte halle dore al sodeynly
Ther com a knight upon a steed of bras,
And in his hond a brod myrour of glas;
Upon his thomb he had of gold a ryng,
And by his side a naked swerd hangyng:
And up he rideth to the heyghe bord.
In al the halle ne was ther spoke a word,
For mervayl of this knight; him to byholde
Ful besily they wayten yong and olde.

This straunge knight that cam thus sodeynly,
Al armed sauf his heed ful richely,
Salued the kyng and queen, and lordes alle
By ordre, as they seten into halle,
With so heigh reverens and observaunce,
As wel in speche as in contynaunce,
Than *Gaweyn* with his olde curtesye,
They he were come ayein out of fayrye,
Ne couthe him nought amende with no word.

And after this, biforn the highe bord
He with a manly vois sayd his message,
After the forme used in his langage,
Withouten vice of sillabil or letter.
And for his tale schulde seme the better,
Accordaunt to his wordes was his cheere,
As techeth art of speche hem that it leere.
Al be it that I can nat sowne his style,
Ne can nat clymben over so heigh a style,
Yit say I this, as to comun entente,
Thus moche amounteth al that ever he mente,
If it so be that I have it in mynde.

He sayde: 'The kyng of Arraby and Yynde,
My liege lord, on this solempne day
Saluteth you as he best can or may;
He sendeth you, in honour of your feste,
By me, that am redy, at al his heste,
This steede of bras, that esily and wel
Can in the space of o day naturel,
(This is to say, in four and twenty houres)
Wher-so yow lust, in droughthe or in schoures,
Beren your body into every place,
To which your herte wilneth for to pace,
Withouten wem of you, thurgh foul and fair.
Or if you lust to flee as heigh in thair
As doth an egle, whan him list to sore,
This same steede schal bere you evermore
Withoute harm, til ye be ther yow leste,
(Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste),
And torne ayein, with wrything of a pyn.
He that it wrought cowthe *ful* many a gyn;
He waytede many a constellacioun,
Er he hadde do this operacioun,

And knew ful many a seal and many a bond.
'This mirour eek, that I have in myn hond,
Hath such a mighte, that men may in it see
When ther schal falle eny adversité
Unto your regne, or to yourself also,
And openly, who is your frend or fo.
And over al this, if eny lady bright
Hath set hir hert on eny maner wight,
If he be fals, sche schal his tresoun see,
His newe love, and his subtilité,
So openly, that ther schal nothing hyde.
Wherfor ayeins this lusty somer tyde
This mirour and this ryng, that ye may see,
He hath send to my lady Canacee,
Your excellente doughter that is heere.
'The vertu of this ryng, if ye wol heere,
Is this, that who-so lust it for to were
Upon hir thomb, or in hir purs to bere,
Ther is no foul that fleeth under the heven,
That sche ne schal understonden his steven,
And know his menyng openly and pleyn,
And answer him in his langage ayeyn;
And every gras that groweth upon roote
Sche schal eek knowe, to whom it wol do boote,
Al be his woundes never so deep and wyde.
'This naked swerd, that hangeth by my side,
Such vertu hath, that what man that it smyte,
Thurghout his armur it wol kerve and byte,
Were it as thikke as *is* a braunched ook;
And what man is i-wounded with the strook
Schal never be hool, til that you lust of grace
To strok him with the plat in thilke place
Ther he is hurt; this is as moche to seyn,

Ye moote with the platte swerd ayein
Stroke him in the wound, and it wol close.
This is the verray soth withouten glose,
It failleth nought, whil it is in your hold.'
And whan this knight thus hadde his tale told,
He rit out of the halle, and doun he light.
His steede, which that schon as sonne bright,
Stant in the court as stille as eny stoon.
This knight is to his chambre lad anoon,
And is unarmed, and to mete i-sett.
This presentz ben ful richely i-fett,
This is to sayn, the swerd and the myrrour,
And born anon unto the highe tour,
With certein officers ordeynd therfore;
And unto Canace the ryng is bore
Solempnely, ther sche syt atte table;
But sikerly, withouten eny fable,
The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,
It stant, as it were to the ground i-glewed;
Ther may no man out of the place it dryve
For noon engyn of wyndas or polyve;
And cause why, for they can nought the craft,
And therfor in the place thei have it laft,
Til that the knight hath taught hem the manere
To voyden him, as ye schul after heere.
Greet was the pres that swarmede to and fro
To gauren on this hors that stondeth so;
For it so *hihe* was, and so brod and long,
So wel proporcioned to be strong,
Right as it were a steed of Lumbardye;
Therto so horsly, and so quyk of ye,
As it a gentil Poyleys courser were;
For certes, fro his tayl unto his eere

Nature ne art ne couthe him nought amende
In no degre, as al the poepel wende.
But evermore her moste wonder was,
How that it couthe goon, and was of bras;
It was of fayry, as the poeple semede.
Diverse peple diversly they demede;
As many hedes, as many wittes been.
They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,
And made skiles after her fantasies,
Rehersyng of the olde poetries,
And seyden it was i-like the Pegasé,
The hors that hadde wynges for to fle;
Or elles it was the Grekissch hors Synon,
That broughte Troye to destruccioun,
As men may in the olde gestes rede.
'Myn hert,' quod oon, 'is evermore in drede,
I trow som men of armes ben therinne,
That schapen hem this cite for to wynne;
It were *right* good that *al* such thing were knowe.'
Another rownede to his felaw lowe,
And sayde: 'It lyth, for it is rather lik
An apparence maad by som magik,
As jogelours pleyen at this festes grete.'
Of sondry thoughtes thus they jangle and trete,
As lewed peple demeth comunly
Of thinges that ben maad more subtily
Than they can in her lewednes comprehende,
They deemen gladly to the badder ende.
And som of hem wondred on the mirrour,
That born was up into the maister tour,
How men might in hit suche thinges se.
Another answerd, and sayd, it mighte wel be
Naturelly by composicioums

Of angels, and of heigh reflexiouns;
And sayde that in Rome was such oon.
They speeke of Al*hazen* and Vitilyon,
And Aristotle, that writen in her lyves
Of queynte myrrours and prospectyves,
As knowen they that han her bokes herd.
And other folk have wondred on the swerd,
That wolde passe thorughout every thing;
And fel in speche of Thelophus the kyng,
And of Achilles for his queynte spere,
For he couthe with hit bothe hele and dere,
Right in such wyse as men maye with the swerd,
Of which right now ye have your-selven herd.
They speken of sondry hardyng of metal,
And speken of medicines therwithal,
And how and whan it schulde harded be,
Which is unknowe algat unto me.
Tho speeken they of Canacees ryng,
And seyden alle, that such a wonder thing
Of craft of rynges herd they never noon,
Sauf that he Moyses and kyng Salamon
Had*den* a name of connyng in such art.
Thus seyen the peple, *and drawen hem a*part.
But natheles som seiden that it was
Wonder thing to make of ferne *aisschen* glas,
And yit is glas nought like aisschen of ferne,
But for they han i-knowen it so ferne:
Therfor cesseth her janglyng and her wonder.
And sore wondrede som of cause of thonder,
On ebbe and flood, on gossomer, and on myst,
And on alle thing, til that the cause is wist.
Thus janglen they, and demen and devyse,
Til that the kyng gan fro his bord arise.

Phebus hath *laft* the angel merydyonal,
And yit ascendyng was a best roial,
The gentil Lyoun, with his Aldryan,
Whan that this gentil kyng, this Cambynskan,
Ros fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye;
Biforn him goth ful lowde menstralcye,
Til he cam to his chambre of parementz,
Ther as ther were divers instrumentz,
That is y-like an heven for to heere.
Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere;
For in the fissch her lady sat ful heyghe,
And loketh on hem with a frendly eyghe.
This noble kyng is set upon his trone;
This straunge knight is fet to him ful sone,
And in the daunce he gan with Canacé.
Her is the revel and the jolyté,
That is not able a dul man to devyse;
He most have knowe love and his servise,
And ben a festly man, as freisch as May,
That schulde you devyse such array.
Who couthe telle you the forme of daunce
So uncouth, and *such a* freisch countinaunce,
Such subtil lokyng of dissimilynges,
For drede of jalous folk apparceyvynges?
No man but Launcolet, and he is deed.
Therfore I passe over al this lustyheed,
I say no more, but in this jolynesse
I lete hem, til men to soper hem dresse.
The styward byt the spices for to hye
And eek the wyn, in al this melodye;
Thes usschers and thes squyers ben agon,
The spices and the wyn is come anoon;
They eet and drank, and whan this had an ende,

Unto the temple, as resoun was, they wende;
The servise doon, they soupen al by day.
What needeth you to rehersen her array?
Ech man wot wel, that a kynges feste
Hath plenté, to the lest and to the meste,
And deyntees mo than ben in my knowyng.
And after souper goth this noble kyng
To see this hors of bras, with al his route
Of lordes and of ladyes him aboute.
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras,
That sethen this grete siege of Troye was,
Ther as men wondred on an hors also,
Ne was ther such a wondryng as was tho.
But fynally the kyng askede the knight
The vertu of this courser, and the might,
And prayd him tellen of his governaunce.
The hors anoon gan for to trippe and daunce,
Whan *that* the knight leyd hand upon his rayne,
And sayde, 'Sir, ther is nomore to sayne,
But whan you lust to ryde any where,
Ye moote trille a pyn *that* stant in his ere,
Which I schal telle you bitwen us two,
Ye moste nempne him to what place also,
Or what countre you luste for to ryde.
And whan ye come ther you lust abyde,
Bid him descende, and trille another pynne,
(For therin lith thefect of al the gynne)
And he wol doun descend and do your wille,
And in that place he wol abyde stille;
Though al the world hadde the contrary swore,
He schal nat thennes be i-throwe ne bore.
Or if you lust to bid him thennes goon,
Trille this pyn, and he wol vanyssh anoon

Out of the sight of every maner wight,
And come ayein, be it by day or night,
Whan that you lust to clepen him ayayn
In such a gyse, as I schal yow sayn
Bitwixe you and me, and therfor soone,
Byd whan you lust, ther nys nomor to donne.'
Enformed when the kyng was of the knight,
And had*de* conceyved in his wit aright
The maner and the forme *of* al this thing,
Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty kyng
Repeyryng to his revel, as biforn,
The bridel is unto the tour i-born,
And kept among his jewels leef and deere;
The hors vanyscht, I not in what manere,
Out of her sight, ye get nomore of me;
But thus I lete him in his jolité
This Cambinskan his lordes festeynge,
Til wel neigh the day bigan to sprynge.

INCIPIT SECUNDA PARS.

THE norice of digestioun, the sleep,
Gan to hem wynk, and bad of him take keep,
That mirthe and labour wol have his reste;
And with a galpyng mouth he hem alle keste,
And sayde, that it was tyme to lye doun,
For blood was in his dominacioun:
'Cherischeth *blode*, natures *frend*,' quod he.

They thankyn him galpyng, by two and thre
And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,
As sleep hem bad, they took it for the best.
Here dremes schul not now be told for me;
Ful were here heedes of fumosité,
That causeth drem, of which ther is no charge.
They slepen til that it was prime large,
The moste part, but it were Canacé;
Sche was ful mesurable, as wommen be.
For of hir fader had*de* sche take hir leve
To go to reste, soon after it was eve;
Hir luste not appalled for to be,
Ne on the morwe unfestly for to se;
And kept hir firste sleep, and then awook.
For such a joye sche in *hire* herte took,
Bothe of hir queynte ryng, and hir myrrour,
That twenty tyme chaunged hire colour;
And in hire sleep, right for impressioun
Of hir myrrour, sche had a visioun.
Wherfor, er that the sonne up gan glyde,
Sche cleped upon her maistresse beside,
And sayde, that hire luste for to ryse.
These olde wommen, that ben gladly wise,
As is here maystresse, answered her anoon,
And sayde, 'Madame, whider wold ye goon
Thus erly? for folk ben alle in reste.'
'I wil,' quod sche, 'aryse, for me leste
No lenger for to slepe, and walke aboute.'
Her maistres clepeth wommen a gret route,
And up they risen, a ten other a twelve.
Up ryseth fresshe Canace hir selve,
As rody and bright, as is the yonge sonne
That in the ram is ten degrees i-ronne;

Non heigher was he, whan sche redy was;
And forth sche walked esily a pas,
Arayed after the lusty sesoun soote
Lightly for to play, and walke on foote,
Nought but with fyve or six of hir meyné;
And in a trench fer in the park goth sche.
The vapour, which that of the erthe glod,
Maketh the sonne seme rody and *brood;*
But natheles, it was so fair a sight,
That it made alle here hertes for to light,
What for the sesoun, what for the mornynge,
And for the foules that sche herde synge.
For right anoon sche wiste what they mente
Right by here song, and knew al here entente.
The knotte, why that every tale is told,
If that it be taryed til lust be cold
Of hem that han hit after herkned yore,
The savour passeth ever lenger the more,
For fulsomnes of the prolixité;
And by this same resoun thinketh me
I schulde to the knotte condescende,
And make of hir walkynge sone an ende.
Amyddes a tree for-druye, as whit as chalk,
As Canace was pleyyng in hir walk,
There sat a faukoun over hir heed ful hye,
That with a pitous vois bigan to crye,
That al the woode resowned of hire cry,
I-beten hadde sche hirself so pitously
With bothe hir wynges, *til* the reede blood
Ran endelong the tree, ther as sche stood.
And ever in oon sche cried and schryghte,
And with hir bek hir selv*en* so sche pighte,
That ther nys tigre non ne cruel beste,

That dwelleth eyther in wood, or in foreste,
That nold han wept, if that *wepen* he cowde,
For sorw of hir, sche schright alway so lowde.
For ther nas never yit no man on lyve,
If that he couthe a faukoun *wele* discrive,
That herd of such another of fairnesse
As wel of plumage, as of gentillesse
Of schap, of al that might i-rekened be.
A faukoun peregryn than semede sche
Of fremde lond; and ever as sche stood,
Sche swownede now and now for lak of blood,
Til wel neigh *is* sche fallen fro the tre.
This faire kynges doughter, Canacé,
That on hir fynger bar the queynte ryng,
Thurgh which sche understood wel every thing
That eny foul may in his lydne sayn,
And couthe answer him in his lydne agayn,
Hath understonde what this faukoun seyde,
And wel neigh for rewthe almost sche deyde.
And to the tree sche goth ful hastily,
And on this faukoun loketh pitously,
And held hir lappe abrod, for wel sche wiste
The faukoun moste falle fro the twiste,
Whan that it swownede next, for lak of blood.
A long while to wayten hir sche stood,
Til atte last sche spak in this manere
Unto the hauk, as ye schul after heere.
'What is the cause, if it be for to telle,
That ye ben in that furyalle peyne of helle?'
Quod Canace unto this hauk above;
'Is this for sorwe of deth, or elles love?
For as I trowe, this ben causes tuo
That causen most a gentil herte wo.

Of other harm it needeth nought to speke,
For ye your self upon your self awreke;
Which preveth wel, that either ire or drede
Mote ben enchesoun of your cruel dede,
Sith that I see noon other wight you chace.
For love of God, so doth your selve grace.
Or what *maye* ben your helpe? for west nor este
Ne saugh I never er now no bryd ne beste,
That ferde with him-self so pitously.
Ye sle me with your sorwe so verrily,
I have of you so gret compassioun.
For Goddes love, com fro the tree adoun;
And as I am a kynges doughter trewe,
If that I verrayly the cause knewe
Of your disese, if it lay in my might,
I wold amenden it, *or* that *it wer nyght*,
Als wisly help me grete God of kynde.
And herbes schal I right y-nowe *y*-fynde,
To helen with your hurtes hastyly.'
Tho schrighte this faukoun more pitously
Than ever sche did, and fil to ground anoon,
And lay aswowne, deed as eny stoon,
Til Canacé hath in hir lap y-take,
Unto that tyme sche gan of swowne *awake*;
And after that sche gan of swown abreyde,
Right in hir haukes lydne thus sche sayde.
'That pite renneth sone in gentil herte
(Felyng his similitude in peynes smerte)
Is proved alday, as men may see,
As wel by werk as by auctorité;
For gentil herte kepeth gentillesse.
I see wel, that ye have on my distresse
Compassioun, my faire Canacé,

Of verray wommanly benignité,
That nature in your principles hath set.
But for noon hope for to fare the bet,
But for to obeye unto your herte fre,
And for to make othere war by me,
As by the whelp chastised is the lyoun;
And for that cause and that conclusioun,
Whiles that I have a leyser and a space,
Myn harm I wil confessen er I pace.'
And whil sche ever of hir sorwe tolde,
That other wept, as sche to water wolde,
Til that the faucoun bad hir to be stille,
And with a sighhe thus sche sayd hir tille.
'Ther I was *bred*, (allas that ilke day!)
And fostred in a roch of marble gray
So tendrely, that nothing eylede me,
I ne wiste not what was adversité,
Til I couthe flee ful heigh under the sky.
Tho dwelled a tercelet me faste by,
That semede welle of alle gentillesse;
Al were he ful of tresoun and falsnesse,
It was i-wrapped under humble cheere,
And under heewe of trouthe in such manere,
Under plesaunce, and under besy peyne,
That no wight wende that he couthe feyne,
So deep in greyn he deyed his colours.
Right as a serpent hut him under floures
Til he may see his tyme for to byte:
Right so this god of loves ypocrite
Doth so his sermonys and his observaunce,
Under subtil colour and aqueyntaunce,
That sowneth unto gentilesse of love.
As in a tombe is al the faire above,

And under is the corps, whiche that ye wot;
Such was this ipocrite, bothe cold and hot,
And in this wise he served his entente,
That, sauf the feend, noon wiste what he mente.
Til he so long hadde weped and compleyned,
And many a yeer his service to me feyned,
Til that myn hert, to pitous and to nyce,
Al innocent of his crouel malice,
For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,
Upon his othes and his sewerté,
Graunted him love, on this condicioun,
That evermo myn honour and my renoun
Were saved, both pryvy and apert;
This is to sayn, that, after his desert,
I yaf him al myn hert and al my thought,
(God woot, and he, that other weye nought)
And took his hert in chaunge of myn for ay.
But soth is sayd, go sithens many a day,
A trew wight and a theef thenketh nought oon.
And when he saugh the thyng so fer i-goon,
That I hadde graunted him fully my love,
In such a wyse as I have sayd above,
And yeven him my trewe hert as fre
As he swor that he yaf his herte to me,
Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,
Fil on his knees with so gret devoutenesse,
With so high reverence, as by his chere,
So lyk a gentil lover of manere,
So ravysched, as it semede, for joye,
That never Jason, ne Parys of Troye,
Jason? certes, ne noon other man,
Sith Lameth was, that altherfirst bygan
To loven two, as writen folk biforn,

Ne never sith the firste man was born,
Ne couthe man by twenty thousand part
Contrefete the sophemes of his art;
Ne were worthy to unbokel his galoche,
Ther doublenes of feynyng schold approche,
Ne so couthe thankyn a *wight*, as he dide me.
His maner was an heven for to see
To eny womman, were sche never so wys;
So peynteth he and kembeth poynt devys,
As wel his wordes, as his continaunce.
And I so loved him for his obeisaunce,
And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
That if so were that eny thing him smerte,
Al were it never so litel, and I it wiste,
Me thought I felte deth at myn hert twiste.
And schortly, so ferforth this thing *is* went,
That my wil was his willes instrument;
This is to saye, my wille obeied his wille
In alle thing, as fer as resoun fille,
Kepyng the boundes of my worschip ever;
Ne never had I thing so leef, ne lever,
As him, God woot, ne never schal nomo.
This laste lenger than a yeer or two,
That I supposed of him nought but good.
But fynally, atte laste thus it stood,
That fortune wolde that he moste twynne
Out of the place which that I was inne.
Wher me was wo, it is no questioun;
I can nat make of it descripcioun.
For o thing dar I telle boldely,
I know what is the peyne of deth, therby,
Which harm I felt, for he ne mighte byleve.
So on a day of me he took his leve,

So sorwful eek, that I wende verrayly,
That he hadde feled als moche *harme* as I,
Whan that I herd him speke, and saugh his hewe.
But natheles, I thought he was *so trewe*,
And eek that he schulde repeire ayeyn
Withinne a litel while, soth to seyn,
And resoun wold eek that he moste go
For his honour, *as oft it happeth so*.
Than I made vertu of necessité,
And took it wel, sethens *that* it moste be.
As I best might, I hid *fro* him my sorwe,
And took him by the hand, seint Johan to borwe,
And sayde thus: 'Lo, I am youres al,
Beth such as I have be to you and schal.'
What he answerd, it needeth nat to reherse:
Who can say bet than he, who can do werse?
Whan he hath al wel sayd, than hath he doon.
Therfor bihoveth him a ful long spoon,
That schal ete with a feend; thus herd I say.
So atte last he moste forth his way,
And forth he fleeth, til he cam ther him leste.
Whan it cam him to purpos for to reste,
I trow he hadde thilke text in mynde,
That alle thing repeyryng to his kynde
Gladeth himself; thus seyn men, as I gesse;
Men loven of kynde newefangilnesse,
As briddes doon, that men in cages feede.
For theigh thou night and day take of hem heede,
And straw her cage faire and soft as silk,
And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed, and mylk,
Yet right anoon as *that* his dore is uppe,
He with his feet wil sporne doun his cuppe,
* And to the woode he wole, and wormes ete;

So newefangel ben thei of here mete,
And loven *none leveres* of propre kinde;
No gentilesse of blood ne may hem bynde.
So ferde this tercelet, allas the day!
Though he were gentil born, *and* fressche, and gay,
And goodly for to seen, and humble, and fre,
He saugh upon a tyme a kyte flee,
And sodeinly he loved thys kyte so,
That al his love is clene fro me go;
And hath his trouthe falsed in this wyse.
Thus hathe the kite my love in hire servise,
And I am lorn withoute remedye.'
And with that word this faukon gan to crye,
And swouned eft in Canacees barm.
Gret was the sorwe for the haukes harm,
That Canacee and alle hire wommen maade;
They nyste how they mighte the fawkon glade.
But Canacee home bereth hire in hire lappe,
And softely in plastres gan hire wrappe,
Ther as sche with hir beek hath hurt hir selve.
Now kan not Canace bot herbes delve
Out of the grounde, and maken salves newe
Of herbes preciouses and fyn of hewe,
To helen with the hauk; fro day to nyght
Sche doth hir besynesse, and al hire myght.
And by hire beddes-heed sche made a muwe,
And covered it with veluettes bluwe,
In signe of trouthe that is in wommen seene;
And al withoute the muwe is peynted greene,
In which were peynted alle these false fowles,
As ben this tydifs, tercelettes, and owles;
And pyes, on hem for to crye and chyde,
Right for *de*spyte were peynted hem bysyde.

Thus leet I Canacee hire hawk keeping.
I wil nomore *as* nowe speken of hire ryng,
Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn,
How that this faukon gat hire love ageyn
Repentaunt, as the storie telleth us,
By mediacioun of Camballus
The kinges sone, of which *that* I yow tolde;
But hennesforth I wol *my* proces holde
To speke of aventures, and of batailles,
That yet was never herde so gret mervailles.
First wil I telle yow of Kambynskan,
That in his tyme many a cite wan;
And after wol I speke of Algarsif,
How that he wan Theodora to his wyf.
For whan ful ofte in grete peril he was,
Ne hadde ne ben holpen by the hors of bras.
And after wol I speken of Camballo,
That faught in listes with the bretheren tuo
For Canacee, er that he might hir wynne,
And ther I lefte I wol ageyn bygynne.
Apollo whirleth up his char so hye
Til that the God Mercurius hous the slye.

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